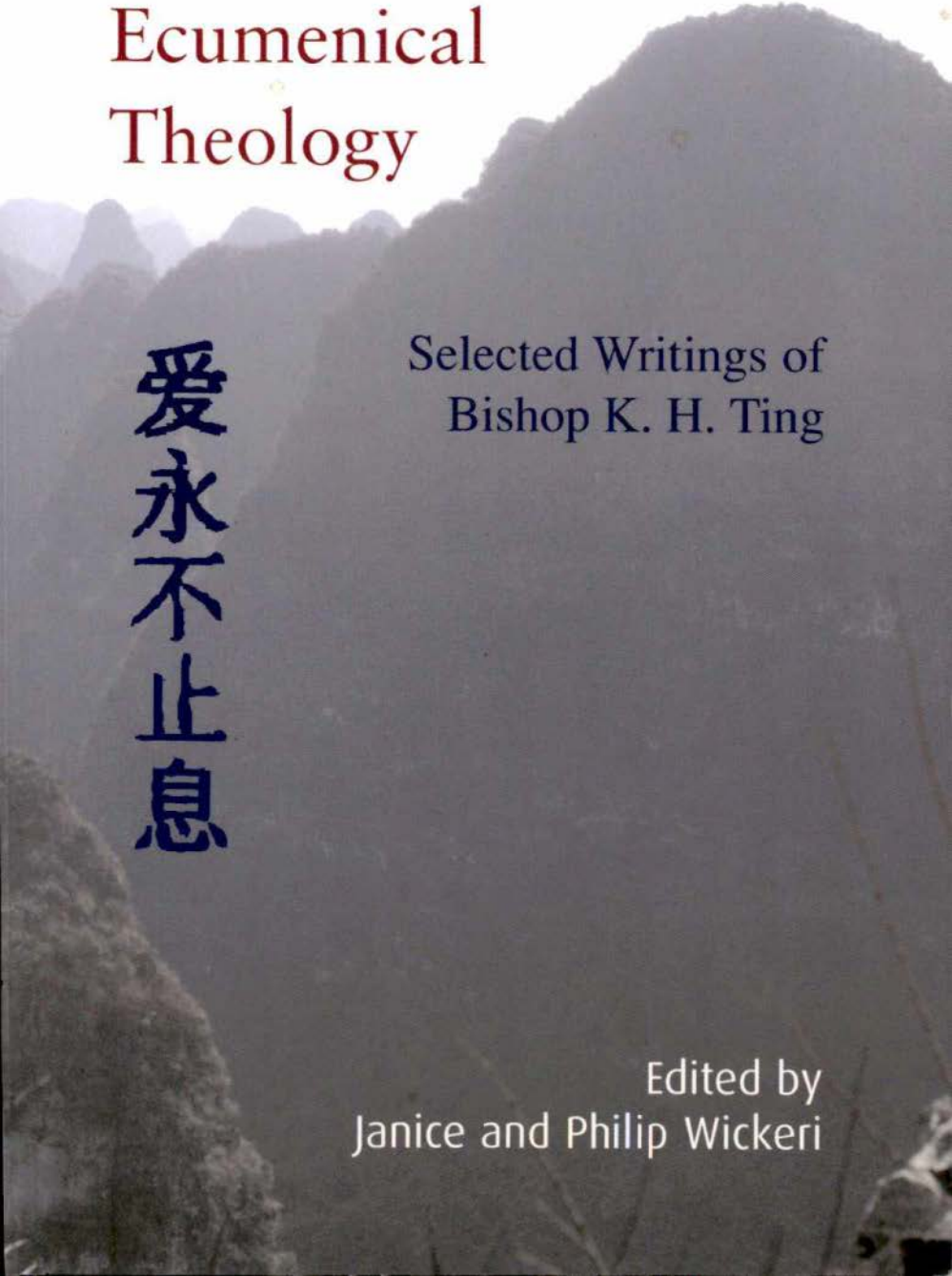
A Chinese Contribution to Ecumenical Theology



爱永不止息

Selected Writings of
Bishop K. H. Ting

Edited by
Janice and Philip Wickeri

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Introduction

Under the leadership of Bishop K.H. Ting, Christianity in China since the 1980s has assumed a higher profile than at any time in Chinese history. There has been a consolidation of "post-denominational" Protestantism; a steady growth in Bible printing and religious publishing; the opening or reopening of churches all across the country; the replacement of ageing seminary campuses with new facilities; the building of new seminaries; a rise of interest in Christianity among non-Christian intellectuals and scholars of religion; and the initiation of health care, education and rural development projects run by the Amity Foundation. Although there continue to be many obstacles to the full exercise of religious freedom, the church in China is now firmly rooted in Chinese society and is growing.

As a theologian, K.H. Ting has primarily addressed the social and ecumenical issues facing the Chinese church. Almost everything he has written has been in response to contemporary concerns of church and society and at times he has been unstinting in his criticism of both. Yet throughout, he has been both a Chinese thinker who loves the church and a Christian theologian who loves China. The sixty years of sermons and essays included in this book present a remarkably consistent vision of Christian faith in the Chinese context, a vision that unfolds with the historical experiences and changing possibilities encountered by the Protestant churches of China.

This has been the personal search of a theologian with clear social and political commitments to situate himself in a new and changing China.

Through his writings, his public life and his government positions, K.H. Ting has consistently promoted a conversation with the world beyond the church. Despite the criticism which has come from some conservative church circles, Ting's contribution to the re-emergence of church life and the opening of the church to the outside world in the 1980s and 1990s is widely recognized. He guided Protestant Christianity in China from a patriotic Christian movement to a church in formation. As both theologian and churchman, Ting has promoted reconcilia-

tion between church and society, Christian and non-Christian, China and the world. This is his enduring legacy to Christians in China and to the church universal.

* * *

K.H. Ting was born in Shanghai on 20 September 1915 to a middle-class Christian family. His maternal grandfather was an Anglican priest and his father a banker active in promoting self-support for Chinese churches. His mother, a devout Christian, inspired him throughout her life and it was in part at her urging that he turned from engineering to the study of theology in the 1930s. Ting received a B.A. from St John's, Shanghai's renowned Christian university in 1937 and a B.D. from its school of theology in 1942. That same year he was ordained to the Anglican diaconate and priesthood and married Siu-May Kuo (d. 1995).

Ting's experiences as a young priest in Shanghai during the war with Japan (1937-45) taught him that the church and individual Christians must be involved in the struggle to save the nation and to free Chinese churches from foreign domination. He served as a YMCA student secretary and, later, as curate of the Church of Our Saviour in Shanghai. During the Japanese occupation he became pastor of Shanghai's Community Church, ministering to an expatriate congregation and visiting prisoners from allied countries who had been interned. It was during this time that he came into contact with the ecumenical movement through the World Student Christian Federation.

In 1946 he and Siu-May left China for North America where he took up an appointment as mission secretary for the Canadian Student Christian Movement. Subsequently, he received an M.A. from Union Theological Seminary in New York and then moved to Geneva to work as mission secretary for the World Student Christian Federation. In this capacity he travelled widely, visiting churches and SCMs all over the world and meeting church leaders in the East and the West. Many became lifelong friends. Contacts with Eastern European churches were especially important for the Chinese church during the 1950s when links with churches in the West became increasingly difficult and finally impossible.

In 1951, against the advice of many in the ecumenical movement, the Tings and their young son returned to China. Their second son was born the following year. This was the time of the Korean war, when foreign missionaries were being expelled and Chinese churches were severing their ties to Christians overseas. K.H. Ting served briefly as general secretary of the Chinese Christian Literature Society (1952-53) before

becoming principal of the newly-established Nanjing Union Theological Seminary in 1953. He was elected to the standing committee of the Three-Self Political Movement (TSPM) in 1954 and in 1955 was consecrated bishop of the Anglican diocese of Chekiang (Zhejiang).

Through his role in the Three-Self Movement, K.H. Ting became a well-known interpreter of the Chinese revolution and the Christian response to it. He travelled several times overseas in the mid-1950s and the early 1960s, attending international church meetings and visiting church leaders. In 1956 he was present at the Anglican Lambeth preparatory conference, a meeting of the World Council of Churches central committee, and a WSCF gathering in Tutzing and in 1961 he attended the first All-Christian Peace Assembly in Prague. Ting was a committed supporter of the programme of the Chinese government and of the principles of the TSPM, convinced that Christians and socialists could, and should, work together for the common good.

At the start of the Cultural Revolution era (1966-76), the churches were closed and Ting lost all his government positions. He was compelled to become part of a political study group with others in disfavour and he and his family were forced to move from their home to simpler quarters. Ting came back into public view in the early 1970s and began meeting overseas visitors. As the Cultural Revolution wound down he was able to gather with Christian friends and seminary colleagues for prayer and worship in their home. With other members of the seminary faculty he took part in a number of translation projects during this time, including the translation of minutes of United Nations' meetings into Chinese and the compilation of a Chinese-English dictionary.

With the end of the Cultural Revolution, Ting emerged as the preeminent leader of Chinese Protestant Christians and in 1980 he became head of both the newly organized China Christian Council (CCC) and the reinstituted TSPM. He also resumed his post as principal of Nanjing Union Seminary, a position he still holds. In 1985 Ting helped to found the Amity Foundation, and continues as its president. As leader of both national church bodies he travelled widely and met with church leaders all over the world. Many churches delegations visited him in Nanjing in the 1980s and 1990s and he was instrumental in rebuilding ecumenical ties. In 1991, K.H. Ting led a Chinese delegation to Canberra when the CCC joined the World Council of Churches.

Ting was named to the standing committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in 1978 and later named to the standing committee of the National People's Congress. He subsequently became vice-chairperson of the CPPCC, a position he continues to retain. This position has allowed him to promote greater religious

freedom in China and to serve as an advocate for reform and change at the highest levels of government.

In 1997, K.H. Ting retired from the leadership of the CCC and TSPM. He continues to receive visitors and is active in affairs of church and state. He oversees the work of the seminary and, through his writings, promotes theological reconstruction in the church.

* * *

Three major influences have shaped K.H. Ting's theological thinking: the changing Chinese context, the ecumenical movement and Anglican theology of the 1930s. Throughout his long career, Ting has consistently grounded his theological understanding in the Chinese context and gives it different expression and emphasis as this context changes.

Y.T. Wu was K.H. Ting's predecessor as leader of the TSPM and spokesperson for Christianity in China. The two men, separated by a generation, were alike in many respects and both were active in the Chinese Christian movement in the 1930s and 1940s. It was Wu who inspired Ting to put his Christian faith and social commitments together in a new way. Ting saw Y.T. Wu as the first Chinese theologian to free his thinking from Western domination and to look at things in historical terms, realizing the significance of the revolutionary movement in China and interpreting it in theological language.

Wu's example opened vistas for K.H. Ting and helped him articulate his own sense of the whole of Chinese history and society, within and beyond the faith of the church, as part of God's plan of creation and redemption. This perspective has been crucial for a minority religion in a secular society. Here was an approach that allowed Chinese Christians to be involved in a political movement to save their country and patriotic intellectuals to remain faithful Christians. The K.H. Ting who left to work overseas in 1946 was strongly grounded in his commitment to the Chinese church and the struggles of the Chinese nation. Like many church leaders from Asia, Africa and Latin America, he saw his ecumenical involvement as contributing to this effort.

Unlike many young theologians in the ecumenical movement in the 1940s and 1950s, K.H. Ting showed little interest in the "christocentric universalism" of Karl Barth and other European theologians. He is not a dialectical theologian and does not take prominent Reformation themes as his point of departure. Ting's frequent affirmation of any and all human action which moves, however slightly, in the direction which God has intended for humankind reveals his unfashionable appreciation of natural theology. In this sense, Ting's thinking owes more to the Eng-

lish theology he learned at St John's than to continental Protestant theology. At St John's he was influenced by tutors who approached theological problems from a perspective which was both catholic and progressive and brought theology into conversation with the social issues of the time. In the 1930s and 1940s, Ting developed a keen interest in theologians and political figures who were seeking a common cause between Christians and communists.

Ting maintains an optimistic view of the possibilities for human beings created in the image of God and, like other Chinese intellectuals before and since, he does not put much emphasis on the doctrine of original sin. This perspective is derived from a Chinese philosophical tradition which stresses the goodness of human nature, the theological liberalism of the 1930s and 1940s and the influence of Marxist social thought. The ethical character of Chinese Christianity today is one of the qualities that has attracted favourable attention from both the government and intellectuals outside the church.

Over the last decade there has been a growth of scholarly interest in, and often sympathy for, Christianity by scholars outside the church. K.H. Ting was the first to suggest the term "culture Christian" for these, mostly non-Christian, intellectuals. Though little known among Christians at the grassroots, their potential impact on church leadership and theological education is great. They have contributed countless translations of Western theological works and have been in the forefront of religious research, especially in the history and role of Christianity in China. The burgeoning numbers and achievements of these scholars, as well as their well-known dissatisfaction with church-going and the level of discourse within the church, has sharpened the realization among church leaders and educators of the need for similarly trained church intellectuals who could enter into dialogue with them.

In today's context of a rapidly modernizing China, Ting sees the need for theological renewal focused in a better-educated clergy forging ahead in the study of Christianity to bridge the gap between Christians and non-Christians and unify the church. At the same time there is a need to raise the "cultural level" of Chinese Christians, which means providing a better grounding in the tenets of the faith and greater openness to fresh theological views that would enable the church to draw from the insights of "culture Christians" and play a positive role in a modernizing China.

The 1999 publication of a Chinese volume of K.H. Ting's writings by a commercial publisher was a public milestone as well as a personal one.

Intended for an overwhelmingly non-Christian readership, this book brought to intellectual circles in China a new awareness of the achievements of the church since 1949 and was an attempt from the Christian side to meet the need for an intellectual expression of Christianity among Chinese intellectuals. It was followed in 2000 by an English version titled *Love Never Ends: Papers by K.H. Ting* (ed. Janice K. Wickeri) and a Korean version (ed. Kim Jong Goo).

The contents of this present volume have been selected for an international ecumenical readership. We have not included K.H. Ting's social, scientific and political writings, some of which are included in the books mentioned above. Ting has always been very conscious of the audience to whom he speaks and in this book readers will find essays and sermons written for a variety of groups. Sermons and meditations from his early career as well as more recent essays have been included which are not in *Love Never Ends*. What emerges from this volume, as from the previous ones, is a remarkable consistency of themes subtly adapted to a diverse and changing context. K.H. Ting's theology has developed in response to the issues of church and society and his basic approach has not greatly changed over the years. His thinking has certainly developed but his point of departure and categories of reflection have remained the same: love as God's major attribute; the cosmic Christ; the continuity between transcendence and immanence; the interrelatedness of creation and redemption; ethics and the importance of an active involvement in the world; church unity and reconciliation.

We thank Bishop K.H. Ting for agreeing to the publication of this new selection of his writings. We have both worked with him for more than twenty years and have appreciated his hospitality and friendship as well as his continuing interest in dialogue with the church worldwide. We also thank Dr Kyung-Seo Park, former Asia secretary of the WCC, who first suggested the need for such a volume, and the WCC Publications office, especially the late Marlin VanElderen who began the conversation with us, and the late Jan Kok, who supported the project along the way.

Philip L. Wickeri and Janice K. Wickeri
San Anselmo, USA
Lent 2002

Reading the Bible at Christmas

Published in a Church Magazine, *Xiaoxi*, Shanghai, 1940

This meditation was written in December 1940 during the war with Japan when K. H. Ting was a young priest in Shanghai.

"The word became flesh, and lived among us" (John 1:14).

No one can deny that this world is full of suffering, sorrow, oppression, and violence against people. All that is rational is destroyed by its own rationality, while the irrational flourishes and extends its control. From our human perspective, it appears that the world is bent on its own destruction.

But this is not God's way of seeing things. God has never despaired of humankind. God feels that we can be saved and has therefore come into our midst for our salvation.

Today, darkness does indeed cover the earth. We cannot see the light. Yet Christians, believing in the incarnation, are profoundly aware that God has not abandoned us. God is not far away but has entered our world and lives among us.

We should maintain a positive outlook. We should view the world optimistically and with hope. We should be prophets in the darkness, facing the light which is about to dawn.

"... who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave... to the point of death – even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6).

From this we can see four things: (1) our Lord Jesus originally occupied a high position; (2) but this high position meant nothing to him; (3) he sacrificed this position to come among us, to become like a slave and to share our sufferings and needs; (4) as a result, he suffered death, even death upon the cross.

If we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus at Christmas only because of the first point, then there is not much meaning to our celebration.

The greatness of Jesus does not lie in his original position which he gained through no effort of his own. His greatness lies in what the other three points tell us about him, his sense of righteousness and his effort to achieve it.

Suffering can temper us, but it can also make us tremble. It can make us remember and yearn for past heights and make us wonder whether all our efforts were worthwhile. Suffering can shake our present faith and make us long to recover earlier days when we did not suffer.

There is no clear way before us yet, and we still must taste deeper suffering. It is precisely at this time that Christians learn from our Lord.

* * *

"... [they] wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

The world was crowded in those days. Two thousand years later, we are still in the same situation. We can understand the difficulties which Mary faced as a mother.

Christmas is a busy season. Everyone's mind is full of their own plans. They leave the baby Jesus to his cold manger.

Factory bosses and shopkeepers take advantage of the Christmas season to produce and sell all sorts of novelties. They are busy getting rich. Lovers make use of the Christmas season to compete with each other in gift-giving. They become preoccupied with the objects of their affections. Soldiers in Europe look forward to a forty-eight hour cease-fire, a temporary halt to the killing, when at least they can enjoy a bit of fresh air (or has this now been vetoed?). And the poor? They hope Santa Claus might bring them a bit of ease and comfort once a year.

Christmas is a splendid holiday. We all bring our own desires to our celebrations. Our lives are crowded with all sorts of illusions, grand designs and selfish hopes. But the mission of our Lord Jesus, the true spirit of Jesus, has been left in the manger where no one will see it, because there is no room anywhere else!

"Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people..." (Luke 2:10).

Fear is the most common phenomenon on this earth. Millions of people live in fear all the time because of some event or another. Fear is like the giant hand of the devil hovering above us, ready to seize hold of our lives.

What people basically fear is simply insecurity. People need to have a sense of security. If a person feels insecure, if he or she feels that there is nothing they can depend on, that their food, clothing or shelter are threatened, then that person is afraid. Millions of people today fear that tomorrow they will be jobless and that wives and children will starve to death.

Fear and anxiety cause people to shrink back and become passive. Only active struggle can root out fear.

"Do not be afraid." This is the gospel the shepherds heard. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or... what you will wear" (Matt. 6:25). Yes! What is the use of being anxious? "And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?" (Matt. 6:27). "But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33).

Yes, only by participating in the great work of "building up the kingdom of God on earth" can we overcome fear. Great love drives out fear. Haven't we seen mother love expressed in a life which never flinches from difficulties or dangers? Only when we begin to see the people through the eyes of fervent love, only when we deliberately sacrifice our own interests for their sakes (which is also for our own sakes) in order to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, only then will we be truly able to overcome fear and hold back the devil's hand. In that kingdom, the people will no longer fear insecurity of any kind.

This is the good news of great joy for all the people.

The Dilemma of the Sincere Student

Article in *The Canadian Student*, 1947

In the late 1940s K.H. Ting and his wife Siu-May were in Canada working with the Canadian Student Christian Movement (SCM). Through speaking in universities, travelling widely and writing articles for the SCM newsletter, Ting helped educate a new generation of students about the role of Christian churches in the world.

Doctors and medical students generally assume that as long as they are curing diseases they must be all right. The world's problems are indeed complicated but, for a doctor, the question is simple: he must be on the right track as long as he is busy curing diseases.

But do they have the right to think that their duty is "simple"? Can the clinic be an ivory tower? In this one world can anybody rightly undertake a merely technical job without thinking of its implications and repercussions on other people's lives?

In a novel called *The Cross and the Arrow* we are told of a house owned by a group of Nazi army officials in which they put twelve charming-looking girls. A doctor was kept in the house to keep the girls free from diseases and infection and so protect the Nazi officials. The doctor did his job wonderfully well. None of the twelve suffered from venereal diseases. The Nazis could use the girls any way they chose. But, at the end of a short period, the girls could not bear any more of it. They all became insane.

Was that doctor's job simple, then? "As long as I am curing diseases I am all right." Does one have the right to take that for granted? Can one really cure diseases without taking into consideration men and women as total personalities? Is a doctor's job just the simple and technical one of fighting against germs in human bodies, or is it really a job of repairing personalities? In the case of that particular doctor in the story, was he in any way responsible for driving the girls to insanity? Was he treating the girls as things to be used or as persons? In the middle of the night, when he examines his conscience, can he consider himself a good doctor?

There is another story, "The Soldier Who Has Not Yet Died", written by a Japanese novelist who was put in jail because of the publication of

that story during the war years. He was talking about his own mental struggle. As a medical student in Tokyo he had to study hard to know anatomy, surgery, etc., in order to cure diseases. But he found it was so easy for people to be killed – through massacres on the battlefields and through the slower process of factory life, child labour, under-nourishment, unsanitary housing, etc. We are restoring individuals to health, one by one, through a very careful and slow process. But look at the mass production of deaths and of maimed bodies by war and social injustice. The social system we are living in is nullifying our hard efforts. Every thinking medical student must share this terrible feeling of frustration!

The dilemma, of course, is felt not only by doctors and medical students, but by people in all specialized fields. There is the social worker who follows up one case day and night, but the world is producing more cases in one day than all the social workers can possibly handle in a year. There is the engineer who thinks that the work of engineering is to construct bridges and highways and residences for the benefit of others, but these things can all be destroyed overnight in a war. There is the minister who considers his job to preach the gospel of peace and love, but there are so many other forces, political, economic and military, undoing on a much larger scale the very things he tries to do. The clinic, the church, the laboratory, the workshop, the farm, and so on, none of them are ivory towers in which we may disregard what others are making the world to be.

Especially after the invention and use of the atomic bomb, more and more conscientious scientists have come to wonder whether there can really be such a thing as the amorality of science: whether scientists have the right to limit themselves to "pure science". In fact, they have come to realize that science can no longer be pure or neutral in the present-day world: it has to serve some cause. The question is what or whose cause we should make it serve.

In the past, we have told ourselves that our job is pure research. We are not interested in other matters; we are concerned only to discover facts and processes. How our discoveries may be used by others is no concern of ours. But today, scientists are realizing the selfishness and danger of that attitude. They are beginning to say: "We cannot be content to sell our skill and knowledge to the highest bidder. We have to ask to what purpose our work is to be put. Will it serve to enrich a few individuals and endanger the welfare and peace of the whole world or will it be for the benefit of all humanity?" We dare not face the tribunal of our conscience if in our absorption with technical science we are unwittingly contributing to making the world more miserable. The scientist is coming out of his laboratory and wants to find out what is happening in the world.

In the January 1947 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, under the title "A Scientist Rebel", Norbert Weiner, a mathematical authority whose ideas played a significant part in the development of the theories of guided missiles during the war, expressed his great indignation at being requested by another technician to supply certain information that would perfect the atomic bomb less than two years after victory over Germany and Japan. He said in part, "In the past the comity of scholars has made it a custom to furnish scientific information to any person seriously seeking it. However... (now) to provide scientific information is not necessarily an innocent act and may entail the gravest consequences... the experience of the scientists who have worked on the atomic bomb has indicated that in any investigation of this kind the scientist ends by putting unlimited powers in the hands of the people whom he is least inclined to trust with their use... I do not expect to publish any future work of mine which may do damage in the hands of irresponsible militarists..."

Technical knowledge is important. But it is more important that the right person is going to use the knowledge. In other words, we have to ask ourselves in receiving technical training: What are we going to use it for? I am interested to know whether a knife is sharp or not but I am much more anxious to know in whose hand that knife is put, especially if it is sharp. Our technical skill is comparable to the sharpness of a knife. If an education merely imparts or transmits certain information and data and skills, it is like merely sharpening a knife without seeing to the sanity of the one holding it, or like training ourselves to shoot arrows without pointing them to any target.

That leads us to the question of the purpose of receiving a university education. Is it a good university education if it just imparts technical competence in a particular field? Should it also help students answer correctly the question: What are you going to do with it?

In moments of crisis and decision, it is not your technical knowledge that counts. It is what you are that counts. The heroic deed of Dr Slotin clearly shows the point. He was a young Canadian scientist from Winnipeg who took part in the atomic research in New Mexico. One day, while experimenting in the laboratory, he detected an explosion: if he did not step forward to do something about it quickly, the whole group in the room would be destroyed. At the split of a second, he had no hesitation to let himself be killed in order to save the lives of the other scientists.

Was it his science or technical knowledge that made him do so? No, it was something else. What was that something else? Could the universities he attended claim the credit for having given him that something? What was in his mind when he took that step? Did he expect the surviv-

ing scientists to continue to work on the atomic research to help destroy the world? Or did he die in order to help bring life and prosperity and happiness to men and women of the world?

There are universities in our world today where the reason for their being maintained does not seem to be the education of persons but the production of technical workers. Through technicalization and departmentalization, they are no longer universities in the true sense of the word. They are places for the acquisition of nuggets of knowledge and certain skills. A graduate in engineering in such an institution is hypothetically a good engineer. But I question how good an engineer he can really be if he has not been primarily educated as a person whose technical development is not achieved at the expense of other values but rather in unity and harmony with the maturation of other interests and abilities, especially those enabling him to enjoy, appropriate and develop creatively the rich, universal, cultural heritage of human history. But, unfortunately, as he is, there are reasons to classify him in the category not of socialized and individualized personalities but of slide rules, T-squares, thumb tacks and reinforced concrete with which he can feel very much more at home. Of course, this kind of narrowing down of life does not necessarily happen to engineers, but can happen to any university student. For instance, one writer has somewhere asked the embarrassing question, "How many students first became anti-semitic or anti-black and assumed a false sense of racial snobbishness during their college days?"

A university is true to its highest calling only as it moves its students to seek a more abundant life by relating their life-purpose to the whole of mankind as a world community. It is here that the Student Christian Movement is both a witness and a help. The Canadian Student Christian Movement is a fellowship of university students who want to make the most of their university life as Christians in fellowship with other Christians.

Does God Call Us?

Article in *Student World*, 1948

During his time in Canada, K.H. Ting showed that he was adept at crossing cultural boundaries. He had already developed an uncommon blend of cosmopolitanism and strong national identification, as shown in his Chinese answer to a universal question.

Is there a missionary call?

Yes, to every Christian. It is most natural for Christians to want to tell others of Christ. My friend Chuan Wen is a typical example. How, surprisingly soon after his conversion, he began to go about, not only selling insurance policies which was his occupation but trying to convert people to his new convictions and new life. To be sure, he committed many blunders. We felt it was dangerously quick. We doubted whether he was not doing more harm than good to himself, to others and to the church. Perhaps, from the standpoint of common sense, our worry and doubt and fear were all warranted. But his new life in Christ simply defied all human common sense. It was we who had to learn anew for ourselves and to give a greater allowance to the movement of the Spirit which escapes our inclination to "patternize" things.

Converts like Chuan Wen may be said to be naturally missionary right from the moment the seed of the gospel takes root in their hearts. We do not need to make them missionary-minded by invoking all the clever devices of missionary education to convince them that they have got something worth passing on to others. You rather think of Christ saying: If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

If this is true of individual converts, this is also true of the "younger churches" as churches. The one thing they discover for themselves very quickly is that evangelism is the life-blood of the church. It is only in reaching the gospel out into the world that the church can keep it vital for itself. Nothing can really kill the church until the church is induced to forget its missionary task.

Let us not be too sure that we have any right to say that we and our church are too weak to be missionary. Let us rather say that we and our

church are not missionary enough to be strong. Indeed, I do not see why God needs to give us strength, even though we say we want it in our prayers, unless it is used by us to proclaim the lordship of Christ to the millions and millions of people around us who have not yet heard it proclaimed.

The truth actually amounts to this: If Christ has become anything to you, he must be everything to you. And if he indeed is everything to you, how anxious you must be that he should be made to mean everything to all people everywhere. That anxiety in you corresponds in a small way to the eternal hunger in the heart of God himself, his eternal longing for the whole of humankind to return to him. The missionary vocation is thus not anything about which we have to be argumentative, as if the force of our arguments were necessary to prop it up. God being what he is, the conquest of the world with love can have no alternative. If happily we realize this and let ourselves be used in this, ours is really the most glorious vocation – the nearest humanly possible vocation to that of the incarnation itself. It is through this vocation that something of God is made knowable to us in terms of our contemporary, everyday, flesh-and-blood realities.

Is Christ wanted by India, China and Africa?

First of all, let us realize that no matter whether India, China and Africa want Christ or not, Christ wants India, China and Africa. The seats for these nations must not be vacant when peoples shall come from the east and the west, from the south and the north, to take their places in the feast of the kingdom.

As to India, China and Africa themselves, as well as all other countries, they both want Christ and do not want him. In their sensitivity, they cannot easily want him because he is uncomfortably challenging and demanding. But they, also in their sensitivity, know that it is Christ and nothing less that they need in order to obtain the grace of God and the deliverance from sin to the full status and liberty of the children of God. Thus to Christ, human beings offer violent resistance just as they also give themselves up in utter humility and gratitude. To Christ, we not only say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinner", we are also driven back to confess, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

But why do we need to be so concerned with the question of whether Christ is wanted by men and women? Do we have any right to expect people to want him? Should we not rather assume that he will have to be unwanted and rejected? For, if otherwise, where lies the hardship, the challenge and, indeed, the necessity of missionary work? We are like the

man who asked Christ, "Will those who are saved be few?" (Luke 13:23) and he might answer, "What is that to you, follow me."

Whenever the church is not quite confident of its own belief, it starts to look eagerly for external factors to justify its existence. If people do not seem to want Christ, we think that the principles of tolerance should forbid us to impose our religion upon others. But tolerance is sometimes very doubtful as a Christian virtue and is a very convenient cover-up for spiritual exhaustion. Everybody seems happy but issues are blurred. When someone is drowning the help called for is not so much for your tolerance of their ideas but a life-belt which you know to be a life-belt.

Are missionaries wanted?

It is unmistakable that missionaries are wanted by the younger churches. They are needed for many reasons and these reasons will mostly hold good even when the younger churches have grown much stronger. They bring to us the experiences and heritages of the older and stronger churches; they link us with the church universal and through them we get a glimpse of the reality and the richness of the whole body of Christ. They bring us tried methods and techniques that can be made useful in our lands. By their life and deeds and by their being what they are, they can gain access to many sorts of people who otherwise can hardly be reached. As fellow-students in Christ, they learn and teach and train the youth so that, before too long, we can be ready to tackle the big untackled areas. They watch and are inspired by non-Christians who come to accept Christ for the first time and they see the New Testament having tremendous impact on the life and mind of the new converts and communities. This, in all its simplicity and straightforwardness, should be very enriching to the total spiritual heritage of the world church if the missionary can interpret it aright. Last but not least, missionaries are important to their mother churches as live wires keeping the missionary torch burning and church life vigorous.

Part of the reason for Christians in the West to ask whether the younger churches still want missionaries is the amount of romantic discussion about the wonders of the younger churches and about how Western missionaries are to work under "native leadership". This discussion has helped Christians in the West to see once again that their job is to let the church grow and achieve maturity and not to keep mission stations going permanently. It has also reminded Christians of the East of our own responsibilities. But I wish that it had not created abroad the notion that the younger churches are really mature enough today to dispense with Western personnel help. Such idealization of the younger churches

is harmful and may undermine much of the missionary interest which would otherwise become manifest.

What about priorities?

It is obvious that all countries have an equal claim. China does not need Christ any more or any less badly than the United States or India. But the line of demarcation today is not national. We Christians are looking at the entire non-Christian world as the area to be won for Christ. There, a total strategy is called for. We need to spread out our resources more evenly.

Missionary work among other peoples will enable us to gain a fuller understanding of the gospel itself. It is only in evangelizing that you really start to evangelize yourself. In the gospel of Christ there is such a deep, unplumbed and hidden treasure that it cannot be fully explored by anything less than the whole human race. We shall not know the eminence of the gospel, and our worship is bound to be incomplete, until it comes to include all for whom it was meant. It will take the whole of humanity to embody the Christ that is yet to be and to bring to full expression the unsearchable riches of Christ. We might very well remind ourselves that the New Testament, which is so essential to our faith, has come to be written only as a result of the missionary work of the apostolic church.

Think of the oppression and injustice that has been done and is still being done by the big powers to the peoples of the countries which are today at the receiving end of missions. In great humility and penitence Christians must attempt, at least partially, to undo the wrong that has been done. Other forces from your countries are there to give a negative testimony to Christianity and it is up to Christian forces to give positive testimony to counteract this.

How much do I have to sacrifice?

For every pleasure you have to give up something. In this the missionary merely shares the common situation of all human beings. We Christians of the East have much to thank the missionaries for but it is perilous for you to think of your task in terms of sacrifice.

We are hesitant to greet a missionary who is obsessed with the idea of self-sacrifice. He reminds us of Jonah. Poor Jonah survived not only his three days in the stomach of a whale but also the centuries since then and is still occasionally incarnating himself in his more refined form in the duty-bound, unhappy and self-pitying missionary!

An unwilling missionary like Jonah can do some good but can also cause a lot of trouble. He works out of a sense of duty. His response to

the call of God is merely intellectual and is not a response of the whole person. He has no joy and no deep love and he cannot hide that fact very long. By virtue of his sacrifice he feels that he ought to be ministered to rather than to minister and he almost feels that his sacrifice puts him in a good bargaining position with God. He forgets that a Christian's vocation is really the highest fulfilment of himself as God sees him. He is finding life and not losing it. There need be no passive, unwilling obedience or the crushing of our own will. We should make a living, willing, joyful and grateful offering of ourselves and of our will to God.

The most powerful illustration of this humility and willingness in taking up a God-given vocation I can think of is that of Mary when the angel of God broke to her God's call to the unexpected task of giving birth to Christ. It was a task of glory, to be sure, but it was also one of unthinkable humiliation. All now owe her eternal gratitude for her ready consent to become instrumental in the most tremendous event in human history, the event of the incarnation of God and the redemption of man. May we ponder anew the joy, the gratitude and the eager cooperativeness in her simple answer "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be unto me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)

Who is qualified?

Our Christian vocation is so glorious that nobody is worthy of it. But at the same time, it is so glorious that your worthiness and your unworthiness do not count at all.

Perhaps as a result of much discussion as to what a missionary should be like or should not be like, some missionaries have been led to take themselves too seriously. They become self-conscious, tense and stiff instead of just being themselves, natural and at ease.

We must take our vocation seriously so that God may use us. Yet, in another sense, we need not take it so seriously that we do not leave room for the Holy Spirit to operate in us. What we do is extremely important because it is God's work. But, at the same time, what we do is also extremely unimportant exactly for the same reason. Just as a physician of the body only establishes certain conditions in the patient and in the environment under which God, who is the God of health and wholesomeness, restores the physical well-being in the patient, so a missionary merely establishes certain conditions under which the Holy Spirit can work to restore the health in the souls of men and women. I am quite prepared to question whether much of the fruit of the missionary work has not been reaped in spite of the missionaries rather than through them. Even Jonah, the unwilling missionary, could be instrumental in bringing

about repentance on the part of the people of Nineveh, but we feel sorry for Jonah himself.

It is very important for missionaries and all Christians to realize their own unimportance, as this is the only way our importance can be viewed in its true perspective. And this perspective can probably help missionaries to strike a happy balance between seriousness and relaxation about their job.

And do not let us forget the life-transforming power of the vocation. The power which works through us works also in us and, in spite of our unworthiness, transforms our own lives and makes us new in ways as significant as the transformation of the lives of the people to whom we are sent. We are called not because we are good but because we have heard the gospel. And as we respond to that one-sided call of God, we are upheld and made into God's fellow-workers.

Why Must We Still Be Preachers?

Article in *Nanjing Theological Review*, 1954

In 1951 the Tings chose to return to China and three years later K.H. became Principal of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. He continued to understand himself as a Chinese theologian writing in a Chinese context, saying that he came back to serve the Chinese church, even though he was critical of what that church had become. The following is a new translation of the full essay.

On a visit to Beijing in the autumn of 1951, I got together with half a dozen of my old classmates. The conversation turned to how we had gone our separate ways in the years since we had parted – it was a replay of our many enthusiastic dinner-table discussions of student days. One classmate suddenly asked me, "The church is a dark place. Why would you still want to be a preacher nowadays?" I briefly gave him my reasons and was met with an unexpected silence that lasted for some time. It was only when we were called to eat that things grew lively again.

In those moments of silence I was overcome by a feeling of extreme isolation and loneliness. In our student days my predilection for church work would definitely have provoked an argument, but we were none of us so young any more. They politely changed the subject and I was struck by the realization that people saw the church as so unclean, so mired in its own sinfulness, that they wanted nothing to do with it. The church's prospects are far from bright if people meet us with an embarrassed silence.

In that silence, gloom swept over my heart like a black cloud. I have a great love for the church but my friends did not find the church loveable. They were wrong, but how could my tongue right such an error? Should I have glossed over all the ways in which the church has been used for over a hundred years to insult the Lord's name? I don't have the skill for it, nor the stomach.

I could not help feeling depressed, because the church I loved and believed in, the church I had dedicated myself to, had been exploited to such an extent that my old classmates could not comprehend why I would be involved in it. Why would anyone still want to be a preacher

nowadays? They simply couldn't understand it. Can we even comprehend it ourselves? Once I had felt the loving arm of God around my shoulders urging me to "feed my sheep", I gladly obeyed, going to work in the church. Only now did I see that this church was unworthy of the name. Had I really followed the wrong path?

It has been two or three years since that reunion in Beijing. Why would one want to be a preacher nowadays? No preacher with a conscience can avoid the question. Who would want to be the perfunctory sort of preacher who, being a monk, goes on ringing the bell? We all want to retain the sense of dedication, the clarity, liveliness and sharpness we had at ordination, or when we made the decision to dedicate our lives to the work of preaching. In these last two or three years our nation has continued to progress rapidly. It is heart-warming to see that the church, too, has made great strides towards new life. And as the nation and the church advance, we see more clearly the meaning and pleasure of the work we have chosen.

Why must we still be preachers? Both to strengthen my own faith and to provide a point of reference for others I would like to share my experience with my co-workers in the church.

We preach the truth

Preachers must take the lead because we have received a commission and what we preach is the truth. The gospel is the truth, a priceless treasure. It alone can fill the void in people's hearts. Nothing can take its place. People of all times and places need the gospel. Yesterday, today and tomorrow, it is the truth. Its truth will shine out if we can rid it of all the non-gospel elements that have crept in and sullied it over the last hundred years and more.

Deep calling to deep

The gospel is truth, but it is not the scientific sort of truth that can be measured in a laboratory. Like the love between two persons, the truth of the gospel is real, but there is no way to quantify it.

"As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God" (Ps. 42:1). The soul's thirst cannot be quantified, classified or explained. But we know that the truth of God's gospel can satisfy our spiritual hunger, just as the stream quenches the deer's thirst.

St Augustine prayed, "Lord, you have put a restless heart in me; I can never find rest until I rest in you." We know from our hearts that this is precisely the state of things. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Weary and carrying heavy burdens – wasn't this just how I felt? "Come to me."

Wasn't this the invitation I so anxiously awaited in the depths of my soul? "I will give you rest." Wasn't this the sweetness I found when I accepted the Lord?

"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:22). This cannot be false because my experience bears it out. When I depart from the Lord thinking that I have gained freedom, I am really in thrall to selfish desires; I am a slave to sin. Only in abandoning that sort of freedom and acknowledging the Lord, drawing near to the Lord, and serving the Lord, am I truly free.

"Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8). This was Peter's dilemma before the Lord, and it is ours as well. We desire God and are not willing to depart from God for we know God alone is our Lord of grace. But at the same time we do not dare desire God and we are glad when God departs from us, at least temporarily, because we are not yet truly willing to cut ourselves off from sin.

The truth of the Bible should not be compared with ordinary truth. It speaks to us in the very depths of our souls. Its dialogue with us is truly "deep calling to deep" (Ps. 42:7). St Bernard said that only a loving heart can comprehend the loving heart of Jesus. The Holy Spirit speaks to us in the very depths of our lives of the existence, omnipotence, wisdom, glory, majesty, sanctity, compassion and justice of God. It also speaks of our sinfulness and rebelliousness, of God's care and patience, of the mystery of the incarnation, of the beauty of Christ's birth, the salvation through the precious cross, the glory of the resurrection, of the Holy Spirit, the church, and the blessing of the sacraments and holy orders, of the mission to preach the gospel and build up the Lord's body, of the hope of God's kingdom to come, of our Christian task to reconcile with others in this world and the need to serve others. This is food necessary to people in all times and places. Science is not much help to us in understanding all this. But this is a truth people know in the depths of their souls, because it is in keeping with all they hope for.

Truth does not reject truth

We say that Christianity is truth. But this is not to imply that everything outside Christian doctrine is false. Christians have no monopoly on truth, nor do they reject it. Many things have appeared in human history that conform to the truth. Christians should not look askance at scientific achievements. Many of the persons, events and people's movements that have emerged in the world today are very close to the truth and we should welcome them with grateful hearts, learn from and support them, and pray for them, because there is only one God from whom comes all

truth, goodness and beauty in the universe. "Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

The gospel of Christ is truth. It is good and most worthy to be preached. But we must acknowledge that not everything outside the gospel is bad or opposed to the truth.

We know that some Christians, seeing the good done by people outside the church today, are not at all grateful to the Lord but have taken a very wrong road. They make every effort to find faults and weakness in unbelievers, as if only then can Christians take comfort and believe that the gospel still has merit! Why must we take an attitude so lacking in conscience and charity? Is our faith to be built on the wrongs, faults and weaknesses of others? It is a fact that humans are sinners, with faults and weaknesses. But this is not the foundation of our faith, this is not the gospel. The gospel begins from the love of God: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16). From this we see that our faith is built upon the merciful love of God. With God there is love, there is the gospel – what shall we fear? Amidst the struggles and battles of the universe, the genuinely determinative factors are not sin, unrighteousness and Satan, but God, the people pleasing to God, God's justice and God's truth.

The road some have taken is an unfortunate one. We should be firm in our conviction that the gospel is truth, the truest truth, the most important truth concerning God's love for humans and God's redemption of them. We do not, however, necessarily think that everything else is bad or false. There is only "one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:6). "From him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). In God there is no contradiction, only harmony, for in him there was not "Yes and No" but in him it is always "Yes" (2 Cor. 1:19). What we know today is limited and we cannot see our way out of some things because we find them contradictory. We should accept these as lessons from God in humble waiting and learn from Paul how to understand them: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Rom. 11:33). But this does not stand in the way of our fulfilling the responsibility God has so clearly shown to us today. When that day comes, we will see the truth in all its fullness, just as Paul said: "For we know only in part,... but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know

only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:9-12).

Make the truth of the gospel known

In the Louvre there is a famous painting of Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden. In the background of the painting we see in the distance cherubim with a flaming sword barring the gates of Eden so that they cannot return. But against all expectation, the eyes of Adam and Eve are not turned back towards the gates. In the dark sky, dim but recognizable, there is a shining cross. This is what Adam and Eve are gazing at. This painting illumines for us the central conviction of the gospel: to restore a right relationship with God. To reconcile with God, as at the beginning, humans must rely on the cross. It was at the very moment of human sin that God entered into the suffering of the cross with the aim of destroying sin. The cross is not simply the wooden instrument upon which Christ suffered for three hours two thousand years ago on Golgotha. The crucified Christ is that "lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Leading people to gaze upon and to know the cross and calling to them, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) is the work we preachers do. Only such a saviour can satisfy the hunger and thirst of our souls, for not only is he a great historical figure, he is the Lord of history, the Saviour of sinners, the Doctor of souls, Friend of the lonely, the Comforter of the afflicted, the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is a high priest to speak for us at the right hand of God. This is the Lord we must preach and it is the truth of this Lord that we must manifest. This is the truth our congregations are seeking. We must satisfy their hunger and thirst. Otherwise their seeking will lead them astray. They will be led into mistaken understandings of the Bible and we will be responsible.

The gospel is the truth, the eternal truth of God. The commission we have received to preach the gospel is no small matter. How can we not tremble as we share and explain the sacred words of God? Does long service in the church really bring us to the point of feeling it doesn't matter? Were we not worthy after all? "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" (2 Cor. 4:7). We do not preach the gospel because we are good and other people are bad but because we have heard the truth, we have been moved by this truth, thawed by the great love of God and because the Lord has chosen and called us by laying hands on us. Let us one day be worthy to say with Paul, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). "Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose

heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:1-2).

Each week, believers are willing to accept God's own truth from our hands. What great faith this shows in us! How can we give ourselves up as hopeless and hold our own ministry as of little account? How can we not keep our eyes on God, strive to praise and study, do our utmost to rid ourselves of the old poisons, so that the sacred words of God may not be diminished by passing through our lips? When Jesus prayed he said of his disciples, "I have been sanctified for them." How can we not even more sanctify ourselves for the sheep? Christ also said, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). May what we believe and what we preach be God's word, that is, the truth of God that makes people turn from evil and be sanctified. There is no more joyful thing on earth than to preach this truth.

New light, new findings

It is a joyful thing to be a minister in new China, not simply because we preach God's eternal truth but because God has been especially good to us, lifting our ignorance, giving us much new light, allowing us to see more deeply how broad and deep Christ's love is, how wonderful and unparallelled is the gospel, how sweet and abundant the treasures of scripture.

God's truth is unchanging. It does not change with history and it does not increase or decrease because of the times. But our comprehension of the truth becomes daily more abundant as the times progress and viewpoints change. The Bible has always contained much truth but we did not see it for what it was. We listened but did not hear. Today the Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts and this truth has suddenly shone forth. Only now do we know how clouded our vision was, how dull the faith in our hearts.

"The unfolding of your words gives light." Today the Lord's words have been opened up on a grand scale. The Bible is spreading its light in the hearts of believers who love God and love the truth. This is the time when we can be preachers. What a wonderful opportunity this should be.

Blind, but now we see...

We can truly respond to much in God's truth saying, "I was blind, but now I see." Let us look at the place of love for country and love for church in the Bible.

In the past we thought that Christians, being spiritual, should not be concerned about national affairs. In this way many patriotic exemplars

in the Bible became "a garden locked, a fountain sealed" (Song 4:12). Indeed, the Bible does not directly mention the term patriotism. But the sentiment of love for one's native land is everywhere apparent. The strange thing is that we were blind to it in the past.

The Jewish people are unsurpassed in spiritual dedication and zealous patriotism. They are the most country-loving as well as the most religion-loving people in the world. There is no contradiction between these two types of love, just as a child loves both its mother and its father. The two loves are in complete harmony. For the Israelites, Jerusalem is the place both best loved and most longed for, where both the temple and the throne of David – the centre of religious and national life – could be found. All the Old Testament prophets had a fervent concern for the fate of the nation. Centuries before Christ the prophet Isaiah compared Israel to a mother's warm embrace:

> Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,
> all you who love her;
> rejoice with her in joy,
> all you who mourn over her –
> that you may nurse and be satisfied
> from her consoling breast;
> that you may drink deeply with delight
> from her glorious bosom (Isa. 66:10-11).

The Songs of Ascents in the book of Psalms (nos 120-34) were chanted on the road to Jerusalem to keep the holy days. As they approached Jerusalem from afar and glimpsed the gates of the city and the heights of the temple, they could not help bursting into song:

> Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.
> Jerusalem – built as a city that is bound firmly together.
> To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord,
> as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
> For there the thrones for judgment were set up,
> the thrones of the house of David.
> Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
> "May they prosper who love you.
> Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers."
> For the sake of my relatives and friends,
> I will say, "Peace be within you."
> For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
> I will seek your good" (Ps. 122:2-9).

Here also we see how concerned the people were for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem. We see the most heartfelt love for country and wholehearted gratitude to Yahweh.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

> Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy;
> then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them".
> The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.
> Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb.
> May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.
> Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,
> shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves (Ps. 126:1-6).

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy" (Ps. 137:5-6).

How many Christians in China today would speak this way of our own country?

> How very good and pleasant it is
> when kindred live together in unity!
> It is like the precious oil on the head,
> running down upon the beard,
> on the beard of Aaron,
> running down over the collar of his robes.
> It is like the dew of Hermon,
> which falls on the mountains of Zion.
> For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
> life forever more (Ps. 133).

Here we see not only the psalmist's concern for harmony among all the branches of the kindred of Israel, we also see his love for the beauty of his land. We can compare it to the Chinese poem: "Vast is the sky, boundless the wilds; the wind blows through the grass, revealing sheep and cows." Such imagery comes only with a deep and true patriotism.

When the nation is in distress, the common people face murder, pillage and foreign occupation – truly unspeakable suffering. Jeremiah felt such grief; he wrote a lament:

> My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns;
> my bile is poured out on the ground
> because of the destruction of my people,
> because infants and babies faint
> in the streets of the city (Lam. 2:11).

He recalls days of peace and prosperity, likening them to gold, pure gold:

> How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed!
> The sacred stones lie scattered at the head of every street.

> The precious children of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold –
> how they are reckoned as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands! (Lam. 4:1-2).

The nation in ruins, the people humiliated. The prophet Jeremiah is not indifferent. His words are moving:

> Women are raped in Zion, virgins in the towns of Judah.
> Princes are hung up by their hands; no respect is shown to the elders...
> The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has turned to mourning (Lam. 5:11-12,15).

The Lord Jesus loves all humanity and gave up his life for all humanity. But this did not lessen his fervent love for his own nation. "When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!'" (John 1:47). Here, Jesus reveals his feelings for his own people, the Israelites. It is as if we were to say today that the Chinese working people are the most loyal and true, most hardworking, most honest and reliable.

Two events are recorded in Luke 19:41-45. Jesus drew near Jerusalem and the sight of it caused him to weep because he knew enemies were coming who would plunge the people into misery. Then, entering the temple, he drove out the sinners and evil-doers. The juxtaposition of these two events tells us that for Jesus, love for nation and people and love for God and church are entirely harmonious.

The apostle Paul was called to preach to the Gentiles, yet his care for his own people of Israel was undiminished. For their sake, he said:

> I am speaking the truth in Christ – I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh (Rom. 9:1-3).

Only those with such deep love for their own people are capable of being preachers.

From these passages, it is evident that the Bible has never asked believers not to love their own country. What the Bible says is clear enough but we were blind to it in the past. Today the Lord has made it clear to us.

The Lord wants us to see

We are using the issue of patriotism simply as an example. The Lord's light shines upon many other truths in the Bible that reflect God's truth.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). But this light can only shine when God's word has been unfolded or opened up to us. God can unfold God's word at the appropriate time. We can only pray, "Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Ps. 119:18). Now is the time deemed appropriate by the Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand" (John 13:7). He also said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:12-13). "But the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). God knows that the vessels we have received are too small. They can hold only a little at a time. And so God nourishes us gradually, day by day, age by age, according to our needs. It cannot be denied that the Holy Spirit is today leading the Chinese church into the truth the Spirit has for us, bringing to mind much the Bible long ago told us, though our stubbornness and arrogance kept us from seeing it.

Build a holy temple worthy of our country

It is a wonderful thing to be a preacher today because, in addition to the two reasons given above, there is another highly important one. Today China is progressing rapidly on every front and people in all sectors of society have glorious missions. Preachers too have a glorious mission which is to make the church a good church, one that becomes the dwelling place of God, one that gains the people's love, and one that can match the progress being made in all fields by the Chinese people.

Must the church follow a path opposed to our nation? Did the Lord say that we must hate what the people like, and like what the people hate? Is it a sin for the church to see eye to eye on some matters with the people? Can the church only glorify God by placing itself in opposition to the nation and its people? Absolutely not.

Paul said he did not simply want to please people (Gal. 1:10). But which people was he referring to? From the context we see that Paul was speaking of some false apostles in the church who were confusing the believers' faith and these false prophets should "be accursed". "We did not submit to them even for a moment" (2:5). With reference to the common people, Paul wants us to "abound in love" (1 Thess. 3:12) and "always seek to do good to one another and to all" (1 Thess. 5:15). Peter said, "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29), though the context tells us this refers to the priests and not to the ordi-

nary people. Even more pleasing to the church of the apostles was this image of the church:

> Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:46-47).

If we genuinely love the church, then we will certainly want to return it to its true features of holiness and beauty so that it may find favour with all the people. A Christian who truly loves the Lord and loves the church, seeing a lack of holiness and progress in the church, will say, "It is zeal for your house that has consumed me" (Ps. 69:9). They will be determined to dispel the darkness in the church and cleanse it of all that people find objectionable, making it pure as snow, so that it will be able to glorify God and lead people to God. This is what "worthy of new China" means. Today, as China advances, what reason can there be for the church to take a path opposed to that of the country? God will be glorified if the church can renew its spirit and forge ahead courageously, keeping pace with the country in construction on all fronts. At the same time, won't this bring glory to the church in the eyes of the country?

In order to preach the gospel everywhere, we should act quickly to put life within the church to rights so that it is worthy of new China. Think about it. Because of the darkness within the church and the bad conduct of many Christians, many of our compatriots are suspicious of, or reject, religious faith. Yes, we are justified by faith and our good conduct will not save us. However, our bad conduct will certainly harm others! Our conduct, good or bad, is closely connected to whether others will be able to be justified by faith before the Lord. This is a very serious matter. Imagine how many people would be added to those who believe in the Lord if our preachers were all holy and righteous in their actions, clearly distinguishing right from wrong. So let us hasten to become new persons with right conduct in this wonderful age. Let the light of the church shine before people, calling them to see our good actions so that glory returns to our father in heaven.

In ancient times, David did not allow religion to fall behind the nation's life. With everything going smoothly in the country, David turned his thoughts to the building of the temple:

> Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent" (2 Sam. 7:1-2).

> O Lord, remember in David's favour all the hardships he endured;
> how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the mighty one of Jacob,
> "I will not enter my house or get into my bed;
> I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids,
> until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob"
> (Ps. 132:1-5).

When God's people had returned and were in the midst of a great building up, God's word came to the ears of the prophet Haggai,

> Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins?... Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured, says the Lord" (Hag. 1:4,7-8).

Clearly, the Lord wants our church to progress and develop along with the life of the nation and its people. For one hundred or so years, under the control, manipulation and corruption of imperialism, the Chinese church was most unworthy of its name. It followed along behind Western churches, modelling itself on them, not knowing what it believed, hoped for or loved. Its situation was truly painfully bleak, broken and foul. But we need not be downhearted. "A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench" (Isa. 42:3). God wants us to work with him, building up the church anew, making it pure and bright, beautiful and attractive and strong, as are so many other new structures in new China.

Building up the nation is an all-round task. A good nation must be good in all aspects. Our religious and spiritual life is an aspect which cannot be overlooked. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link because all the links are important. If all our nation's links are strong, except for the church, the whole chain of the nation will be weak. No matter how many children a mother has, she hopes they will all grow to be good and beautiful. If one of them is physically weak, or does not strive to progress, this is unlucky for the whole family – how she suffers. Isn't this true of our country too? The nation does not want anyone to lag behind.

Since liberation, the church has not lagged behind the progress of the life of the nation as a whole. The goal of self-government, self-support and self-propagation has clarified the direction for the church. Looking at the church in Nanjing we can see the new atmosphere. An unprecedented spirit of fellowship, equality and friendship between men and women preachers has appeared. Two neighbouring seminaries which had held fruitless discussions on union for the past fifteen years have, on a voluntary basis, not only come together but have united with ten other seminaries in east China. Coordination and cooperation among the

denominations has developed to a point where they share each other's burdens and supply each other's needs. Half the repair costs for a church in the city came through voluntary aid from other Nanjing churches. This would have been unimaginable in the past. But the glory should not go to ourselves, rather we should praise our Lord who loves the church, who has not only brought the church back to himself, but has washed, healed, settled, and nourished it, truly showing us: "The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former" (Hag. 2:9).

Today, as the nation embarks on construction, the Lord wants us to "consider how you have fared" and make the Lord pleased and honoured. The road before us is still long! The mission that has fallen on our shoulders is to make the Chinese church truly become a holy temple according to the Lord's heart. This is glorious, joyful and proud, is it not?

Conclusion

The gospel is truth – this is reason enough to consider preaching a worthy calling. With this and the two considerations discussed above, how can we not dedicate our prayers to the Lord for wisdom, work hard and strive to be worthy workers?

A pastor is a sculptor of the life of the soul who must meticulously shape that life to completeness, just as the heavenly Father is complete. What dedication this is. Can we take up the title of pastor – this sacred title – a pastor who is true and just, discerns right from wrong, and feeds the sheep?

A preacher is worthy, but we have no right to be proud. Much is required of us in these times. If we are slack in our own spiritual life, political study, knowledge in ministry and moral formation we may fall out of the running – the worst fate for a preacher. We should ask God to give us a humble heart, not a false and pharisaic humility, but a genuine humility arising from a sense of honour about our holy orders. Only in this way, with a cautious and conscientious heart, can we pursue progress and allow God to lessen our unworthiness.

To know that our work is considered useful by God, the people, the church and the nation is the greatest reward. May the work we do be this kind of work. Then one day we will hear the voice of the Holy Spirit: "They will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them" (Rev. 14:13).

On Christian Theism

Delivered at Nanjing Seminary, 1957

This essay is a courageous Christian apologetic in response to the ultra-leftist politics of the times. K.H. Ting was specifically criticized for this text by opponents during the Cultural Revolution. He argues that a view of religion as opium is neither factual nor original to Marx. In so doing he is vulnerable to critics who dismiss such concerns as politically motivated attempts to harmonize Christianity and socialism at the former's expense. But for Ting and other church leaders of his generation, the effort to make a "foreign" Christian faith Chinese has been a hard-won battle, not to be lightly set aside. At times, as in this essay, this has led to a forceful defence of Christianity. This text was first published in No Longers Strangers, *Ray Whitehead, ed., Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, USA.*

Our Christian belief in God is, generally speaking, not so much the result of reasoning or persuasion as of spiritual insight. This is not surprising. We know our mother not because we have been persuaded by some argument or demonstration but because from childhood on we have felt her love. Many carpenters who have never heard that pi equals 3.1416 still know that the circumference of a circle is a little more than three times its diameter and this is enough for the practical needs of their work.

But for a theological student or church worker today, just to believe in God and not to know how to give a reasoned explanation of this belief is not enough. Theological understanding is too important to be neglected. We do not subscribe to the various atheistic theories but we must also know where they are wrong and, even more, what the right view is. We must think deeper so that when we go out to preach the truth of the gospel our words may carry weight because of their reasonableness. In 1 Peter 3:15 we read, "Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence."

Christianity and the idealism-materialism question

Is Christianity idealist or materialist? Many people both within and outside the church are interested in this question. Some Christians are

trying to deny that Christianity is idealist because to be idealist, they think, is to be politically backward. Some are trying to prove that Christianity is materialist because to be materialist is assumed to be politically progressive.

Some people think that materialists are of necessity progressive and idealists are backward or even reactionary. But the situation is not as simple as that. The early Taoists and Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu did not believe in God or in spirits and explained everything by the heavenly Tao resident in all nature. They had therefore a strong tendency towards atheist and materialist thought. But at the same time they had a strong aristocratic spirit and represented aristocratic interests. Wang Yangming's doctrine of an instinctive conscience would seem to be idealist but it encouraged a spirit of individual initiative, a recognition of right and wrong and a questioning of tradition, which both in his time and since has had a forward-looking influence too important to be neglected.

It is not natural to Christian understanding to divide all thinking into the two categories of materialist and idealist, with a deep gulf between them. People ask if Christianity is materialist or idealist. The question itself does not correspond with reality. Other people may ask the question if they like but we are not obliged to accept the dichotomy and answer it simplistically. To answer that question simplistically is to adopt a scheme or framework imposed on us from outside our Christian understanding.

There are many ways of dividing mankind. Some are universally recognized and others are questionable. No one questions the validity of dividing all mankind into the two categories of men and women, or of dividing the present generation into those born in either the 19th or the 20th century, for a 21st century birth is still to come and those born in the 18th century are now probably all dead.

But there are other doubtful classifications because they do not include all individuals. For example, some people in the West, in order to vilify socialist communities, would classify all socialists as either Stalinist or anti-Stalinist. But this classification is not a fair one and is, in fact, only intended to confuse the mind and break up socialist unity. Again, the Jews considered circumcision important and divided all men into the two categories of the circumcised and the uncircumcised. But Paul said, "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creature is everything." As a Christian, the question was whether a person had or had not become a new creature.

We do not think it is satisfactory classification to group all shades of thought under either materialist or idealist. It is a simplification of facts. Would it not be truer to say that there has never been a 100 per-

cent materialist or a 100 percent idealist? Idealism and materialism not only stand opposed to each other, they also interpenetrate each other, for they are not only mutually exclusive but mutually influential as well. They have points of disagreement as well as of agreement. There is some idealism in a materialist and some materialism in an idealist. Someone has said, "Tao Xingzhi was once an idealist and his name then was Tao Zhixing. Afterwards he became a materialist and changed his name to Tao Xingzhi." But I cannot think of Mr Tao as simply as that. Man is the most complex of animals and his thinking is very complex. In all thinking there is development. A man may change his name overnight but intellectual development cannot get away from the fact of a certain continuity in the process. The *Soviet Philosophical Dictionary* describes Pavlov in these words: "Great Russian physiologist and thinker, inheritor of 19th-century Russian materialistic philosophy and the progressive traditions of a naturalistic science... his theories dealt a death blow to idealistic psychology and laid the foundation for a true materialist psychology." And yet we know that Pavlov was, at the same time, a devout member of the Orthodox church. Evidently the coexistence of materialism and idealism is as common as their mutual opposition.

It is even more difficult to classify Christianity as either idealist or materialist because, although it is in form a product of history, it is in essence not an ideology and not a structure built upon an economic base. Its true substance is revelation, the incarnation, and therefore it transcends all human lines of division. Some Christians accept the line between idealism and materialism and say, "we are not idealist", or even say, "we are materialist". This is all unnecessary because we do not need to accept the dichotomy itself.

Christianity, in its organization, its expression in thought and its ceremonies has of course been deeply influenced by human history but in essence it is not a fruit of history. The gospel comes from the free revelation of God. This gospel is Christ himself, through whom all things were made. A theologian of Western Europe has said, "The greatest danger facing Western theology today is that of reducing Christianity to an ideology and thus placing it in opposition to another ideology – communism." This is true. What we preach is the gospel. It is Christ and that is something entirely different from an ideology. It is something which moves in a different orbit from any system of thought. If we always remember that we will have a clear understanding from which to perceive that all talk of a comparison of Christianity with communism, of similarities or differences, is beside the point and superfluous.

Is Christianity an opiate?

"Religion is the opiate of the people." This caricature of Christianity is forceful and cutting.

But regardless of how applicable it is to Christianity, let us note first of all that the point of criticism is valid only as it is directed against the religion of certain times or of certain persons and not against religion itself at its highest.

To analyze the effect which religious belief can have on some individuals is permissible, but the question whether God exists or not is an entirely different thing. Let us grant, for argument's sake, that you have discovered that the religion of certain individuals has had a narcotic effect upon them. This discovery does not at all prove that the universe is without a creator. The mental state of some believers may be so chaotic that they seek for an anaesthetic and use religion as opiate. Some preachers may even take pride in presenting religion in this light and of course this is not good. But what does this prove regarding the existence of God? The thinking of some religious believers is backward and needs help, but the fact that these backward believers use religion as an opiate has no bearing on the question of the being of God. Similarly, if they do not resort to an opiate that would not prove either that God exists or does not exist. The existence of God is a different and independent question.

There are many things in the world which can be used as opiates, not just religion. Literature, art and science can all become means of intoxication and escape from reality. The other day we had a meeting with some students from the university of Nanjing, some of them students of astronomy. This is the point I tried to make: Let us imagine a man who because of some great grief has become very pessimistic about the world, his country and his family and so he seeks for an escape from reality in order to numb his mind. Is it not possible that such a man would choose astronomy as his opiate? Day and night he might sit at his telescope drawing calmness of mind from the great emptiness of space. But the fact that he was using astronomy as an opiate would not mean that the sun, the moon and the stars which he saw through his telescope did not really exist. On the contrary, it is possible that his observations might make a great contribution to the advance of astronomy. His subjective psychological state is one thing while the objective existence of the universe is quite another.

If any one discovers that certain religious believers in certain periods of history have used religion as an opiate and should therefore draw the conclusion that God does not exist, we must say to them, "Your logic is not good. You have no right to draw this conclusion."

Certainly it is a painful fact which we cannot deny that religion as preached by some preachers and received by some believers is an opiate. The forceful statement "religion is the opiate of the people" was made not only by Marx but also by the English clergyman Charles Kingsley, a man who had great sympathy for the downtrodden working classes. At that time the destructive features of capitalism had appeared, the life and security of workers was without protection and even six-year-old children had to work in factories under inhuman conditions. In the face of such conditions a large part of the church of those days did nothing but urge people to control themselves and accept deprivation, saying that after this life they would enjoy happiness in heaven. That was why Kingsley made this stinging statement. But the use of Christianity as an opiate is an accident and does not belong to the essence of Christianity. In Matthew 27:34 we read that when our Lord was hanging upon the cross a well-meaning individual, wishing to relieve the pains of Christ's death, offered him a drink of some opiate, but when he had tasted it he would not drink. Did he not have the right to drink it? Why did he refuse? Our Lord, at the end of his human life, at the most important moment when he was bearing the sins of all mankind upon the cross, wanted to keep a clear mind to the very end. He was not willing to use a drugged and benumbed mind to complete the work which his Father had given him to do. See how, without hesitation, he refused the opiate. Consider, if he had consented to drink the drug, he might have escaped the pain but then he would no longer have known what was going on around him. The seven great words from the cross would have been left unsaid and the meaning of the cross itself would have remained dark and unclear to posterity.

What Christ gives is forgiveness, consolation and strength – not a benumbed spirit. We pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Where is there any opiate in that prayer? This is the highest religion, the religion of revelation that is Christianity. St Ambrose (340-397) once said, "You rich men, when will your greed end? Will it continue until there is nothing left on earth but yourselves? How do you dare to take all nature as your own? The world was made for all men, how can you claim it as your private property? Nature does not recognize the rich, it produces the common man. The products of nature are for the use of all and God wants the world and all it contains to be for the use of all" (Ambrose, *De Nabuthe Jezraelita*, 1 PL 14:732). The saint who said this certainly was not a man who had been benumbed by some opiate. In the national museum of literature in Prague there is a statue of John Hus, under which is carved this memorable saying of his, "Woe unto me if I remain silent. For it would be better for me to die than not to take a stand

against great wickedness, as this would make me an accomplice to sin and hell." Who dares to say that a man who talks like this had been drugged with opiate? People do not take the primitive conditions of early communist society as a reason for distrusting the future of the communist cause; they do not, because of the absurdities of alchemy, look down upon modern chemistry nor, because of the superstitions of old-time astrology, despise modern astronomy. In the same way we must not judge the gospel of Christ by narcotic religion.

We should study religion concretely, and not proceed from a priori definitions; otherwise we will fall into the error of dogmatism. Feudalistic barons said they were acting for heaven and then proceeded to oppress the people. The Taiping leaders also said they had been appointed by heaven to liberate the people and they fought for them. Both used the word "heaven" but with what different meanings. If we say that religion is, by its very nature, reactionary so that its progressive manifestations are, for that reason, more dangerous than its reactionary manifestations, then what can we say of the Chinese Christian church today whose members have shown themselves able to support new China and uphold socialism?

The existence of God

The Bible does not discuss the question of God. The first book in the Bible does not begin with an argument in favour of the existence of God but with the declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Why did not God manifest himself to us in such a way that his existence could not be doubted? We know that God is invisible, infinite, indefinable. To lay down a definition implies limitation. But God is infinite and anything man can define is not God. Everything in the world is subject to definition – God alone defies every definition that man makes. St Anselm said, "God is that, than which nothing greater can be imagined" (Anselm, *Proslogion*, ch. 4). Clement of Alexandria said, "We cannot know what God is but we can know a little of what he is not." If the existence of God were as plain to us as the existence of this table, what place would there be for faith? Faith is higher than scientific demonstration. Faith is the only thing in the world that will call people to great achievements and great sacrifices. Someone said, "Religion is betting your life on the existence of God." Yes, religion is exploration, fellowship, love, deep calling unto deep. Science may one day discover the existence on Mars of intelligent beings like humans but that scientific demonstration will not give us fellowship with them. Fellowship can be established only upon the basis of mutual trust.

Take the parable of the Prodigal Son. The elder brother was living a tasteless life without faith, hope and love. Although he daily saw the face of his father, his father's existence meant nothing to him, much less was there any real fellowship. But when the younger brother found himself in serious trouble his one thought was to return to the bosom of his merciful father. You may call it adventure or the great decision. Certainly it was a venture of faith. And so he returned. What he found was the love of a father and not the cold sentence of an impartial law. He truly became the son of his father. And after this experience his knowledge of his father and his relation with his father was something different from what it had been before. The father's love has now transcended scientific reasoning and become the experience of faith. This relation and this experience was not understood even by the older brother and outsiders would know still less what is this deep calling unto deep.

How far can we go in understanding God on the basis of our own reason and our observation and analysis of nature?

From observation of nature we may perceive a certain order and conclude that behind nature there is a mind or intelligence. The Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius, who was not a Christian, said, "This world is either a haphazard miscellany or an ordered unity. If it is the former, what is there for me to consider except how I myself will ultimately return to dust? But if it is the latter then I am in the presence of the mind that created that order. I am filled with awe and have a ground on which to stand" (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, book 6, no. 10). If you are walking through a trackless desert and come upon a wristwatch lying on the ground, you would at once conclude that someone had been there before you for the sands of the desert, no matter how they evolved, would never of themselves produce a wristwatch. The wristwatch in itself is an indication of a mind, an intelligence, a purpose. The universe is much more complicated than a wristwatch and its workings much more exact. How could it possibly be the result of an accidental concurrence of phenomena without a mind or intelligence behind it? We cannot deny that behind the manifestations of nature there must be a mind, an intelligence, a purpose. Of course, to make this affirmation does not solve every problem but to fail to make this affirmation leaves still greater problems unsolved.

Anyone who views the universe thoughtfully ought to reach this conclusion. But if one views the universe only in the light of reason one will not be able to proceed further. One will not be able to perceive from nature more than this about God who transcends nature.

You will have seen that I am pessimistic about the ability to find and recognize a personal God in nature by reason alone. What I maintain is

that all that nature can give us is a certain sense of something immeasurable and mysterious, beyond our power to interpret.

Paul told the Athenians to "search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'in him we live and move and have our being'" (Acts 17:27,28). Again, "he has not left himself without a witness in doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:17). Again, "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). But on the basis of human reason, how much can we know of this God? We can know something of his creative activity but how much can we know of his purity, his righteousness, his love and his redemptive purpose? Who would not have a pessimistic answer to this question? We recall the Old Testament words, "Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7). So it is not surprising that Paul also presents another side to the picture: "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).

The foolishness of preaching is no less than the revealed truth of God. The mystery of nature can only be unfolded by revelation. Only when we have accepted the revelation and come to know the Lord of revelation can we understand the mystery of nature. But from that moment on we can see in every part of nature the handiwork of God.

Let us take an illustration. Some of you are graduating this year. You think to yourself, I have been away from home for a long time. I must go home and see my mother before reporting for work. When you get there she is not at home. But you know her and love her and as you go in and look around, everything in the house reminds you of her. Now, supposing you had one of your classmates with you, someone who did not know your mother. As he looks around the room it will not remind him of anything – to him it is just a room.

It is like this for us with nature. Unless you have come to know God through revelation and faith, nature itself will only be space and mystery and not much else. But if after receiving the revelation you again look at nature, all is now new. You perceive that all the truth, goodness and beauty of the world proclaim the glory and working of God.

In short, we Christians on the one hand recognize that the witness of nature is not enough. We cannot expect to know God from it and therefore we are not disturbed when someone says they cannot find God in nature. On the other hand, we do not look upon nature with suspicion or

denigrate it because it is, after all, the handiwork of God. Thomas Aquinas sums it up very well: "Grace does not negate nature but fulfills it."

Finally, the knowledge of God comes only through revelation. John 1:18 tells us, "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." Jesus himself says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). The truth of these two passages is borne out by the experience of countless Christians.

Environment and sin

Modern thinking has a tendency to attribute all the ills of society to a bad social system, as though there could be no other source for them, such as man himself.

For Christians this tendency is an important corrective. In the past we thought little about the social order. Our bias was simply to attribute all evil to one's sinful nature. We said, the question of sin is the only question and once it is solved any social system will be good. If it is not solved, no social system will be good. Today, we must acknowledge our mistake. It is true that the question of sin is fundamental. But we cannot expect everybody to repent at once and thus solve the problem of sin. It is still necessary to live together before all have repented and been regenerated. What kind of society will be best for our common life? That is an important question. The difference between socialism and capitalism is very great. Our studies during the past few years have shown us the superiority of socialism. We certainly cannot think of the two systems as of equal value for China.

But can we deny the existence of sin? Certainly not. In New China the level of morality has been greatly raised. Does that mean that the question of sin has been solved? Decidedly not.

The fact that we must come into a good environment (New China) in order to manifest a better standard of behaviour does not mean that we are without sin, rather it is a demonstration that we are carrying a heavy load of sin, so that we are not free from the influence of environment. Consider your old grandfather or grandmother, crippled with rheumatism so that they cannot move around much in winter. Then spring and summer come and they become more lively. Does that mean they are now well? No. It only proves the weakness of their bodies.

Not long ago I went to visit some country churches and on the bus I sat by the driver watching him as he alertly turned the steering wheel, now this way and now that. I wondered: if the road were perfectly straight and perfectly level, would it be possible for the driver to be less

alert? Could he, after setting the direction, take his hands from the wheel and sit there reading a book? I answered my own question: no. Even if the road were as straight as a ruler and as level as a pane of glass there is bound to be a certain amount of play in the setting of the wheels. And if there is any play at all, even if it is too small to be noticeable, the result would be that without the steering of the driver the car sooner or later would go into the ditch. As a saying in one of the old classics has it, "A mistake of a thousandth of an inch can put one wrong by a thousand miles." Of course, the straighter and smoother the road, the better. But the most up-to-date factory cannot produce a car which will obviate this weakness inherent in the nature of the car. Our life in the world is like this. We must work for an improved social order and environment but human sin is not thereby cancelled. We still need a Master to come and hold the steering wheel of our life.

In a school where I once studied we had in the gymnasium a ball about the size of a basketball but much heavier, with an off-centre weight in it. The result was that no matter how you tried you could not roll it straight. It was very exasperating. Is not one's life like that? In the presence of God, yesterday, today and tomorrow we still can be described in the words of Isaiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way" (Isa. 53:6).

In today's society the level of moral behaviour has been raised and this is a fact which we Christians should welcome. We should not go around looking for flaws as if the only way to vindicate our faith is to discover that things in the world are as bad as ever. We should welcome a social system that is able to raise the level of moral life. Although the change of a social system can only limit the effectiveness of sin, it cannot solve the problem of sin. Sin can only be healed by love, forgiveness, salvation and grace. It is not a matter of social progress.

Perhaps someone will accuse me of having too pessimistic a view of man. But what pessimism is there in this view? It is instead great optimism. When the Prodigal Son came to understand his own situation, our Lord said of him, "He came to himself" (Luke 15:17). Evidently in his sin he was not himself but when he repented his true self showed itself. From this we see that Jesus had a very high view of man, one which certainly cannot be called pessimistic.

The reason for unbelief

Some people are always analyzing Christians, trying to explain why we believe in God and saying that we are looking for an opiate. But why is it that from the beginning of the world there have been people who would not believe in God? There are two reasons, the first a general or

universal one, the second one that has become much more real since the 19th century.

Moral and spiritual reason

To believe in God or to believe that there are living beings on Mars may seem both to be acts of believing, but they are vastly different. If you believe there is life on Mars you just believe it and, if you don't, it makes no difference in your moral or spiritual life. It makes no demands upon you whether you believe or do not believe. Your life, your thinking and your actions will be the same.

Belief in God is a different thing. If you don't believe, that is all there is to it, but if you do believe, the consequences are great. Adam sinned and then when God drew near he hid himself in the trees because he did not dare to look upon the face of God. We can imagine how happy he would have been then, if there had not been any such person as this God. If he had remained hidden for a long time would not he and his children have come to believe that God after all did not exist?

Peter knelt at Jesus' feet saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). Since he knew Jesus to be Lord and himself to be a sinner, should he not instead have repented? Why would he ask Jesus to depart? Yes, we have all had this experience of both wanting Christ and not wanting him. Christ is what we want, but yet he demands that we repent. If we are not willing to repent, if we are unwilling to pay the moral and spiritual price, we can only ask this Christ to leave us, and even wish that he did not exist.

Belief in God sometimes becomes an opiate, that is true. But consider how often refusal to believe in God becomes an opiate.

How many people there have been since the beginning of history who have drugged themselves by a denial of God's existence so that they could continue to sin, avoid responsibility, and stifle the reproaches of their conscience! Sometimes we meet people like this in our churches. They are morally reprobate but refuse to repent and the result is that having departed from God they gradually come to deny his existence. The only way they can recover their faith is first to repent of their sin.

The church's failure to manifest God

A second reason for the world refusing to believe in God is the failure, the darkness and the sin of the churches. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16), but we do not do this. People are not able to see Christ's Father, full of love, justice and purity in the life, the thinking and the work of Christians. Instead, what people can see in the church is a God whom their own sense of morality and justice does

not allow them to believe in. This is an important reason why people today do not believe in God.

The French Catholic writer Jacques Maritain, in his *True Humanism*, says: "What is the source of communist atheism? It is that the Christian world is not true to its own principles, thus arousing the hostility of communists who then go on from hating the Christian world to hating Christianity itself."

Nikolai Berdyaev, a Russian theologian, in his book *The Origins of Russian Communism*, writes:

> Christians who condemn the communists for their godlessness and anti-religious persecutions cannot lay the whole blame upon these godless communists. They must assign part of the blame to themselves and that a considerable part. They must be not only accusers and judges; they must also be penitents. Have Christians done very much for the realization of Christian justice in social life? Have they striven to realize the brotherhood of man without the hatred and violence of which they accuse the communists? The sins of Christians and the sins of the historical churches have been very great, and these sins bring with them their just punishment.

The Armenian Christian Tiran Nersoyan, in his book *A Christian View of Communism*, says:

> From a practical point of view, atheism is the result of the necessity felt by the founders of Marxism and communism to free the proletariat from the influence of priests and reactionaries in order to secure their complete allegiance to themselves. It is also probable that atheism may have had the additional attraction for them of being the most drastic way of eliminating the causes of disunion among the peoples of different religions and sects from which their ranks have been recruited.

We need not agree entirely with these writers. But because of the sins of the church and especially because the church in the field of politics was often on the side of the enemies of the people, the church lost its ability to show forth God. This point is one which we in the Chinese church especially can appreciate. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement is calling the whole church out of bondage to imperialism and reaction of all sorts and this makes it a movement of great significance to the future of Christian witness in China.

In their criticism of religion people have mainly centred their attention on some of the evil results of religion in personal and social life, such as its inhibiting influence on human development, its harmful effect on health, its upholding of private ownership of the means of production, but have not touched upon the substance of our faith. Some of the things criticized are foreign, or now a thing of the past, while others are Chinese in origin and are still problems. These should rouse us to greater

vigilance and self-examination, amending what is wrong and strengthening what is right.

Today we should enter fully into the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, purifying and rectifying the church lest it come under evil influences and justly suffer rebuke from the world. Only by doing this can we make possible the conditions for witnessing to the substance of our faith – the truth of the gospel.

Faith and fellowship

Atheism has for a long time existed alongside the church – it is not something which the church has just met in China in the last few years. We must not be alarmed. We should recognize the right of all shades of atheism and agnosticism to exist and become accustomed to living with them, learn how to profit from their criticism of religion, and learn how to present the gospel to people who have been influenced by these theologies. Theism and atheism are matters of personal faith and worldview, not matters of the state or government. A state or a government cannot hold to either theism or atheism. But there are some in the West who try to use this question as an instrument in the cold war and this we do not approve of. We know that neither cold war nor hot war will change an atheist into a theist. The West has published many books on the subject of Christianity and communism but they are not of much value to us, because their authors have been too much influenced by the anti-Soviet, anti-communist spirit of their own milieu so they do not speak with the loving spirit of an apostle but with the self-righteousness of the elder brother. We know that only as the church rectifies itself and becomes truly the church can the gospel radiate the liberating strength of its own truth and bring people to a knowledge of sin, repentance and confession of Christ as Lord. To use the question of atheism and theism to foment division and disorder would do no good but a great deal of harm.

A nation or government cannot be either theistic or atheistic. These are questions of faith and faith is personal. It does not pertain to a nation or a government. Note the characters for faith (xinyang) both have a "man'" character on the left hand side. An individual person can believe or not believe in God but a nation or a government is not a single individual. It can neither believe in God nor not believe in God. We Christians need not take it seriously when some nation calls itself a Christian nation. We see that their government leaders assume the title of religion and appear to be very devout but their purpose could be just to advance their own political ends and get support for their actions. They call their nation a Christian nation and their government a Christian government. But Christ has said that his kingdom is not of this world so how can a nation or government

dare call itself by the name of Christian? The true purpose of such boasting is simply to use the name of Christian to advance their own ends, to get glory in the eyes of the world, but the result is only to drag down the name of Christian until it is viewed with suspicion and even hatred by the world. We know from history that those who make a pretence of religion can appear very devout. Even Herod who wanted to kill the Christ child pretended that he wanted to worship him. And we know well how Herod's successors have cleverly used religion to advance their dreams of world hegemony. Jesus said, "Not all who call me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." This we must never forget.

We Christians must be wary and not be taken in by any nation or government just because it assumes the name of Christian. The question we should ask is not whether a nation constantly uses the name of God, but whether its principles and policies are good and whether it really fulfills the responsibilities that God demands of a nation. Only by weighing a nation by this rule can we avoid being deceived. Only in this way can we judge factually and fairly. In regard to the political leadership of any nation, what we should ask is not who the leader is, or what he believes, but what the practical content of the leadership is. Instead of asking about the religious faith of any leader, we should ask whether we approve of the constitutional principles of this government and how the leading party and people join together to carry out those principles. Communists are atheists. But differences in world-view do not prevent political unity. We do not approve of their atheism, but we welcome their political leadership and we welcome their frank attitude regarding questions of belief too. They tell the world openly what they think about religion and so there is less danger of them trying to use religion. Everything is straightforward and open and clear, unlike the so-called Christian countries where religion is used by pretenders so that questions become confused and the issues of right and wrong are not clear.

The building of the church in a socialist country is a task that has never been faced by the church in all the first nineteen centuries of church history. In self-government, self-support and self-propagation we face a difficult responsibility. Why does God give this responsibility to us and not to someone else? Is it because we are better? No. God has his own purpose and it is one which we cannot fathom. But at least we know, just because our Chinese church is a weak minority group, that we can demonstrate how the church of God in weakness can show strength and we can show the workings of God's might and thus give glory to God. God has indeed chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame those that are wise and the weak things to put to shame those that are strong. This shows that the strength is from God and not from ourselves.

That Love Might Abound

Meditation in Bethlehem Chapel, Prague, 1961

Invited to the All-Christian Peace Assembly in Prague 1961, Bishop Ting was the assembly preacher. This sermon was given in the Bethlehem Chapel, the church of John Hus, the 15th-century Protestant reformer. Ting stressed the centrality of theological reflection to an ethical orientation and political involvement. Love is God's most important attribute and this makes possible and even necessitates the ethical stance of Christians who must work for love and justice in society. Nature and grace are complementary, not contradictory, ethics is a point of contact between Christians and non-Christians and political involvement is a function of one's ethical and Christian stance.

> When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

In a historic sanctuary such as this one, where saints all through the centuries have seen the glory of God and gained strength for their witness by word and by deed in the world, as we together join them in offering to God the worship that is due to him, how deeply we become aware of his presence and nearness. John Hus and what he represented have long become a common heritage of humanity. As we turn our thoughts to the sundry times and diverse manners in which God has spoken in the past by the prophets we realize, with humility and yet with gratitude, the responsibility that falls upon us today as their successors in the same procession.

The passage in St John's gospel reveals to us something of both Christ's expectation and of his anxiety for the church. Christ puts before the church the image of the shepherd – the protector, the encourager, the

friend. This is what the church is expected to be. But at the same time, Christ is worried that the church might lose its first love, fail to fulfil the function of the shepherd, leave the sheep uncared for and even give occasion to the wolf to molest the sheep. Out of his high expectation and his uncertainty he repeatedly asks Peter, "Do you love me?"

How is the church to love Christ? Let us begin with Christ's love for the church.

"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

Christ's love for the church lies in his work of cleansing and sanctification.

The primary characteristic of the church cannot be its global coalition, no matter how imposing this may be to human eyes. The primary characteristic of the church must necessarily be its holiness.

The holiness of the church lies in its separation from the sins and evils of the world and the setting apart of itself for the service of love and justice and truth among men and women. Unity, if it comes through the Holy Spirit, promotes the true catholicity of the church and is, of course, to be prayed for and sought. But a unity which tries to transcend or ignore the distinction between right and wrong, or one which distorts or blurs the issues of good and evil, can become an inroad of all sorts of mistakes, dirt, degeneration and pain in the life of the church. Thus, it is entirely thinkable that to separate can sometimes be just as much the right principle for the church as to unite is at other times.

In the book of Revelation the seven churches are criticized again and again for their sin of unholy associations, but not once is alignment exhorted.

As we assemble here in Prague these days to seek the cause of peace, it is required of us that we distinguish between right and wrong. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness" (Heb. 12:14). The search for holiness implies the giving up of moral nihilism.

Sometimes we hear the view expressed that it is not only futile but also a sign of human pride and self-righteousness to try to analyze facts or clarify issues because, it is said, everybody in the world is one of the unpeaceful ones and harbours within an evil spirit of cold war. Sometimes, when the cause at the root of some tense situation in the world is about to be determined, a voice emerges to incriminate everybody in the common guilt and to call everybody indiscriminately to repentance. Then, before we are aware of the fact, use is made of our sound Christ-

ian teaching to the end that issues vital to the people are glossed over, responsibility for international lawlessness and tension is shifted from where it rightly rests and is universally shared by all alike, and injustices to the masses of the people are allowed to stand as something that is not quite distinguishable from justice.

The unmerited reconciliation with God in Christ, which is his free gift to us, impels us to an irreconcilability with the sins and evils in the world and certainly does not exempt us from it. It has been rightly stated by Archbishop Nikodim that "the peace which Christ brought to earth presupposes not our being reconciled with evil and the forces of sin on earth but, on the contrary, our victory over evil and the liquidation of sin by means of unflagging struggle against them... a bitter, obstinate fight".

When the wolf is attacking the sheep it is the shepherd's responsibility to take the side of the sheep and to protect them. What sort of a shepherd would he be if, in the name of fairness, he put the wolf on a par with the sheep? In the same way, how dare we make ambiguous, equalized judgments between the victim and the victimizer?

We have held this All-Christian Peace Assembly in the native land of the great John Hus. We have been told how our African brothers and sisters have suffered yesterday and are still suffering today from the calamities of colonialism. And we have learned how Cuba has been invaded recently. We have heard the sound of the struggle for peace on the part of the peoples of all countries. All these inspire us today to make common cause, as Hus did in his day, with the large majority of the people everywhere in their fight against the forces of sin and aggression. This is a call of God to us today. To respond to it is our responsibility before history.

Today, in this Bethlehem Chapel, we are praying where once John Hus prayed and we are praising God where once John Hus praised him. We recall how Hus, seeing painfully the corruption and degeneration of the church under the influence of foreign political power and the control of reactionary domestic autocrats, bravely unfurled the banner of holiness. It was not an empty, sterile, passive holiness which stood for nothing in the world of realities, but a holiness with content. A true concern for the suffering and the aspirations of the people. A search for their welfare and a resolute fight against sins and evils where they were. Prof. Hromádka told me that on the wall of the Czechoslovakian national museum of literature these words of John Hus have been inscribed: "Woe unto me if I remain silent. For it would be better for me to die than not to take a stand against great wickedness, as this would make me an accomplice to sin and hell." Even to this day the voice of John Hus has not lost its dynamic power in moving us in the depths of our heart.

Is this dividing of the right from the wrong, this taking of a side, contrary to our Christian faith? Far from it. This is exactly what is demanded of us by our faith. Is it a sign of the lack of love for Christ? By no means. A true love for Christ requires it. And is this self-righteousness? Certainly not. This is precisely what St Paul prayed for before God when he said, "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that you may approve things that are excellent, that you be pure and blameless till the day of Christ."

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Y.T. Wu – Our Forerunner

Shangai, 1981

Y.T. Wu (1893-1979) was the leading spirit behind the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). His work was an inspiration to Bishop Ting who described him as "being on the side of the people and of justice without counting the cost". This same description characterizes K.H. Ting himself.

Y.T. Wu's passing was a big loss to Chinese Christianity as well as to China. Articles are written in his memory not just to express personal feelings of loss but to enable more people to know of Y.T.'s contributions to church, to society, to China and to the world so that, with some familiarity with the struggles their predecessors went through, they may know better how to make their choices in new circumstances.

Chinese Christian theological thinkers before Y.T.'s time were, on the whole, a prejudiced generation. It was hard for them to shed the shackles acquired from their exposure to Western capitalist culture. At a time when the cause of the Chinese people's liberation under the leadership of the communist party was advancing might and main and liberated areas embraced tens of millions of the people, these theological thinkers were found to be disappointingly poorly informed, one-sided and narrow-minded. A leaf before one's eyes is enough to prevent one seeing Mount Tai, as we say. These intellectuals gave themselves the right to assume that the West represented the mainstream of human history; that only Western ideas were high-class, axiomatic and full of vitality; that the rule of the Kuomintang (KMT) and its government was right and proper, capable of giving leadership to national salvation, especially if polished with a veneer of Christianity. If we look into their writings we see that objective facts about the Chinese people's liberation movement and the liberated areas were non-existent in their consciousness. Or, if there was any awareness at all, they were treated as a temporary aberration of no consequence. Most claimed to take God as the object of their studies, extolled their own objectivity and transcendence of politics, felt themselves to be over and above the mundane world. In fact, however, their background and upbringing had conditioned them in all their more

important judgments without their knowing it. What they wrote and said had many political implications, usually echoing the views of Western powers and the KMT. While whole-hearted supporters of the KMT were few and far between, the attitude of most amounted to little more than voicing grievances in small matters but giving way on main issues. Thus, to the people they were voices of deception, encouraging people to a passive acceptance of their state of bondage. Then there was the small group which was more blatant and violent, putting forward all sorts of vilification of communist and progressive forces to give vent to pent-up hatred.

But Y.T. stood out from the common view. He gave importance to history, to the people and to the people's movements. He looked at things in historical terms. As early as the 1930s he saw the great significance of the people's liberation movement in China as a hopeful sign. He adopted theological views which were helpful to overcoming his alienation from it and related himself to it in goodwill. He encouraged many Christian youth to be sympathetic to the movement and, at the same time, absorbed its insights for his own theological nourishment and growth. To understand Y.T., it is important to see that he was always aware that, before God and before humanity, the theologian has to face the question of political accountability. He had to shout from the housetop, calling the church back to the standpoint of the prophets and Jesus Christ, to be on the side of the people and of justice without counting the cost. As a result, like John the Baptist, he had to face the opposition of church authorities and of the KMT. In reality it was Y.T. himself who gave Chinese Christianity some new ingredients, or restored some old ingredients, enabling the church to adopt a fresh image before the Chinese people.

Y.T. in the 1930s

My contacts with Y.T. began in the mid-1930s, which was a time of national crisis caused by the aggression of the Japanese militarists and their occupation of the provinces of the northeast. At that time Y.T. was in his last stage as a pacifist. When answering questions before an audience he would still refer to his total opposition to taking up arms but he had already stopped propagating non-violence. He dwelt most on the question of national salvation. He argued that if we Christians merely did our devotion behind closed doors or just sought personal salvation and a place in heaven after death, that was self-centredness and showed that we had not been saved from our captivity of selfishness. Christians needed to see the importance of the social system. Only when the social system in China underwent a basic change would objective conditions emerge to make personal transformation possible. Consequently, the pri-

mary task was securing national independence and liberation. China needed a political restructuring to meet the requirements of the national struggle for liberation. He spoke out loudly for a united front of all patriots, particularly between the KMT and the communist parties, for an all-out mobilization to resist the aggression of the Japanese militarists.

Y.T., in his speeches, presented a Jesus who stood with the masses of the suffering people, ready to go through the torture of the cross and shed his blood for their liberation. This attitude of Jesus was presented as being in harmony with the very constitution of the universe or with benevolence and was therefore of eternal value. Y.T. said that he himself accepted this Jesus as his Christ, the centre of his life, from whom he received abundant life and learned that the supreme meaning for his own life was to enable the masses of our people to also share in life abundantly.

While listening respectfully to Y.T., I had in one pocket my lexicon on New Testament Greek and in another my textbook on the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. The education I was receiving led me to become absorbed in the question of Christ's two natures and of his place and role in human redemption. A Christology such as Y.T.'s put Jesus back in his contemporary history as well as right within the realities of our own national conflicts, and it struck a fresh and compelling note in my ears. It opened up before me a whole area I had not known to exist and hence had never entered but which now summoned me. At that time I had felt myself to be above politics and indeed above the world but, on the other hand, I was quite dissatisfied with Chiang Kai-shek's non-resistance policy vis-a-vis Japanese aggression which had resulted in the loss of the entire northeast. I was also disgusted with many of my schoolmates leading a life given to wine and nonsense, some so imbued with the comprador mentality and lack of patriotism as to be discussing which was the best world power for China to be colonized by. When I saw how closely Y.T.'s love for Christ and his concern for the wellbeing of the people were harmonised and how his loyalty to Christ generated in him a great passion for truth, for life's ideals and for the people I, as a young man seeking something meaningful in life, felt inspired and sensed that a direction for my seeking had been pointed out to me.

I still believe that Y.T.'s criticism of the tendency to dwell on divine transcendence alone and his eagerness for us to see the immanence of the transcendent God in nature, in history and in people's movements was consistent with classical Chinese notions and, therefore, evangelistically important. It played an enlightening and liberating role theologically and politically. He opened up a sluice-gate for many Chinese Christians to take their place in the movement for national salvation with their faith

intact, as well as for intellectuals mindful of the national struggle to take their place among Christians. He saved a portion of Chinese Christianity from being just a tranquillizer and pain-killer for people in humiliation and suffering.

To this day I am not one who understands and embraces Marxism in its entirety. But the change in my attitude to Marx from blind animosity to respect was due to Y.T. I had never read any of the writings of Marx or Engels and all that I knew of them I had heard from the writings and hearsay of Western and pro-KMT Chinese intellectuals. Marxism, they claimed, was a monster not worth consideration and one scholar after another claimed his ideas were nothing but trash. But Y.T. took an open-minded attitude towards Marxism. In one of his speeches to us he used this quotation from a Marxist writer, "Labour produces miracles for the rich, and yet sheer poverty of the workers. Labour creates the palaces but, at the same time, slums for the workers. Labour creates beauty but at the same time makes the workers deformed. Labour produces machines to take the place of manual work but sends some workers back to barbaric labour and turns the other workers into machines. Labour creates wisdom but makes fools and idiots of the workers."

I felt moved by this quotation because it so aptly described the polarization in Chinese society. The simple language also impressed me with its poignancy. And it came from a Marxist. This not only made me more sympathetic with the victims of exploitation and oppression in our society but also shocked me out of my unwarranted contempt for Marxism.

Not slighting but giving importance to history, picking history up from the dust, looking at it from the people's standpoint, finding in it the mission of Christians and our partners in the fulfilment of the mission – these were the factors which made Y.T.'s approach different in theory and in practice from that of the other theological thinkers of those days. Compared with the liberation theology of Latin America today, Y.T.'s Christology and hermeneutics were not so well thought through and therefore failed to reach such heights. But in terms of pointing out a direction he was, in a true sense, a forerunner in the evolution of a theology that relates itself positively with the aspiration and struggle of the third-world peoples in their fight for independence and democracy as against colonialism, feudalism and reaction.

Y.T. and Three-Self

After my contacts with Y.T. during the few years prior to and following the outbreak of the war of resistance against Japan, it was not until May 1949, with the People's Liberation Army taking over Nanjing and Shanghai and Y.T. in Prague for a meeting of the Word Peace Coun-

cil, that I had another chance to talk with him at great length. I was then in Western Europe on a visit to Czechoslovakia. We spent a lot of time together on the eve of the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

On that occasion, Y.T. told me what he had seen of the new life of people in the liberated areas, particularly the spirit and interpersonal relationships that had emerged as a result of their new position as masters of their own destiny. He quoted Matthew 25 and said that the communists denied Jesus Christ but put love into practice, while many Christians never ceased to profess Christ and love verbally but could not bring themselves really to present him to the world because of their lack of love for the masses.

I asked Y.T. a question which disappointed him. New China is indeed admirable, but if the government tries to do away with religion, are you still going to support the new China? Y.T. reproved me gently for giving ground too easily to rumours in the Western press about the persecution of religion in China and said among other things, "Even in the eventuality that religion will be harassed, I will still love this motherland" (I hope this will not be quoted out of context). He said he was sure that in new China problems and grievances of all sorts could be settled through a democratic process of consultation. He spoke of the important place of the united front in the national life of new China and on the theoretical and political basis of the policy of religious freedom of the communist party in the liberated areas which would be endorsed by the soon to be established national people's government. Y.T. was certain that the implementation of the policy of religious freedom would not be a question if we took the situation as a whole, although he was not oblivious to the many local problems that would arise. These could not be finally eliminated without extensive and intensive education on the religious policy, not only for adherents of various religions but also for the general public and the cadres on all levels.

At that time Y.T., like many other Chinese church leaders, seemed to be counting on the government implementing a policy of religious freedom without any strong realization that Chinese Christianity had no right to feel complacent by depending on that policy for its survival. Christians needed to work hard to make the Chinese church self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating if they were to have a footing for conversation with other citizens and to bear Christian witness to them.

Y.T. also said that the coming of the kingdom of God was a hope beyond history and that he would not equate new China with the kingdom or think of it as reaching directly to the kingdom. However, he stressed even more strongly that this hope on the part of Christians

should not lead us into ignoring our tasks within history. The fulfilment of historical tasks and the realization of the super-historical hope were not unrelated. In my understanding his point was comparable to thinking in terms of the ultimate and the penultimate which I was encountering in Europe among theologians who wished to be true to the faith and, at the same time, involved in the world. In those remarks of Y.T.'s there were already germinal the thoughts which Chinese Christians later summarized with four characters: ai guo ai jiao – love our motherland and love Christianity.

My wife and I did not return to China until two and half years after our visit with Y.T. in Prague.

Before liberation Y.T.'s theological thought was devoted to conceptions of God and of Christ and to politico-ethical questions, but after liberation he paid greater attention to ecclesiology.

That Christianity in any country should be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating and thereby become a religion with a national character of its own is a vision any church in a third-world country needs to give priority to in its ecclesiology. This is a platitude now. Since the middle of the 19th century missionaries and national church leaders with foresight have been giving voice to this task. What is regrettable is that for so long it has been only a voice. Few churches have actually achieved complete Three-Self. Y.T. alone made use of the whole trend towards independence in newly-liberated China and led the Chinese Christians to take the Three-Self path on a national scale. It was a mass movement and it occurred under special historical circumstances and, consequently, not all things developed in accordance with the intention of its leaders. But, in thirty years, the Three-Self Movement can at least claim the following three achievements:

1. Christians are no longer behind others in their love for the motherland. "One more Christian, one less Chinese" has become past history. Christians are making their contribution in many fields to national construction.

2. Chinese Christianity is autonomous not only in personnel but also organizationally, financially and politically. There is now a foundation upon which to build for the Chinese people as well as for Christians elsewhere. We have a Christian church rich with Chinese characteristics.

3. As a result of these two achievements people in China are coming to take a more enlightened view of Christianity. They no longer look at it as a foreign religion. The relationship with the Chinese people is becoming normalized. The number of Christians is increasing and not decreasing.

All these changes are important to the Christian cause in China as much as they are important to the stability and unity of our country. While we are thankful to God for his love and gracefulness in making these changes possible, we must also recall the faith, courage and resourcefulness which Y.T. demonstrated during those years.

Three-Self aims at making Christianity Chinese. Only when Christianity in any country can achieve independence from the influence of foreign political powers and the bounds of foreign historical traditions can the radiance of Christ beam through the prism of national culture and come out with a brilliance all its own. The people will feel at home in the presence of this brilliance and Christians the world over will be enriched by it in their knowledge of the riches that are in Christ. It is only in these terms that we can speak of the contribution of a local church to other churches. If the churches in various countries are not first of all independent and do not take their own paths, then interdependence and give-and-take within the church universal will remain words only.

The Three-Self task of Chinese Christianity is by no means completed today. The question of cultural transformation and upbuilding is harder than that of political belonging. When we think of our captivity and hesitation on the theological front and when we note how much old and Western stuff our life of worship and devotion still exhibits in disharmony with the Three-Self ideal, we are aware that we are not fulfilling the original wishes of Y.T. and other fore-runners. We hope that the next thirty years of the Three-Self Movement will witness in-depth cultural development. At our present stage of development Chinese Christians should dare to be themselves and blaze a new trail, giving due attention to the accumulation and development of our insights. We need to find solutions to our problems in our own ways and thus enter more deeply into Christ by exploring the rich treasure of truth that is in him.

The influence of the apostle Paul

The middle of the 1950s to the middle of the 1960s was a period during which I had many contacts with Y.T. Aside from consultations on work we found ourselves often together discussing questions which we came to call those of "theological line" or "theological reconstruction". These were occasions for personal sharing between two Christians which I associate to this day with sharing the breakfast of Cantonese raw fish rice porridge in the Wu household.

For one thing, those chats unfolded Y.T.'s high evaluation of the role of the apostle Paul. Y.T. was not prejudiced against Paul, although in post-liberation China there were those who used his teaching on the justification by faith to sow dissension between believers and non-believ-

ers. Y.T. thought highly of Paul for his work in extending the wisdom and worship of Judaism to the whole world. We owe it to Paul that the Christian gospel broke loose from its Jewish shell and became the treasure of all humanity. This breakthrough was of inestimable significance in the making of human history. Paul was a rebel with great courage and resoluteness. Justification by faith was put forth not in order to create cleavage between those with faith and those without. In fact, it played down greatly the contradiction between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Justification by faith meant that circumcision was not the means to justification. It went a long way in overcoming Jewish religious and nationalist chauvinism and in broadening the Jewish perspective by propagating the equality of all human beings before God. This was the liberating effect of the doctrine that transformed Christianity from a sect within Judaism to a world religion and Paul played a decisive role. Early in the 1950s there was a gust of wind within Chinese Christianity caused by some who preached that Christians should regard all non-believers in Jesus Christ as evil and regard all crimes committed by Christians as having been covered up by the blood of Jesus, basing all of this antinomianism on the Pauline justification by faith. This was not only politically reactionary but theologically, biblically and historically distorted.

I think we may say that Y.T., in starting the Three-Self Movement, was doing something comparable to the historical role that Paul played in that they both caused the Christian religion to rid itself of certain deformities and narrowness and ushered it into a new stage of history.

Y.T. often spoke of the poverty and misery of a religion which revolved around the belief-unbelief axis. In such a religion Christ is only for my use and to my advantage. He gives me salvation and peace of mind as a payback to my belief. It is still self-centredness and is a negation of Paulinism. But the realm of God's concern extends much farther than the circle of those who recognize him.

In Y.T.'s later life he liked to go to Hebrews to affirm Christ as the heir to the whole universe and the whole universe being sustained by his word of power, and to Colossians where it is said that all things are held together in him. Y.T. felt strongly that, to us who live in new China where the people have gained the political power which had been denied them for thousands of years, the New Testament references to Christ as the sustainer of the whole cosmos carries a special meaning and sense of reality that is pivotal to further theological exploration.

Y.T. did not approve of the theological line implicit in certain circles which presented a redeemer not quite at one with the Creator which is, in a small way, a repetition of the old Gnostic and Marcionite heresy.

Y.T. spoke with passion on behalf of the unity of God's work of creation, redemption and sanctification. To him, the significance of Nicea did not lie in stressing the division or the equality of the three persons of God and even less on their taking the centre of the stage one after another in three successive historical periods but, rather, in upholding the truth that the three reflect the several aspects of the permanent character of the one God. Y.T. gave a major place to the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification, recognizing the Holy Spirit as the bestower of all values and virtues in humanity. He opposed limiting the Spirit's work of sanctification and renewal to the church and to established ecclesiastical orthodoxy or orthopraxis.

We often went into the question of nature and grace as one of the ways the politico-theological line was drawn in Chinese Christianity in the early 1950s. He was naturally averse to pitting the one against the other. If nature is indeed so fallen and rotten, the enemy of grace, then the dichotomy between the Creator and the Redeemer would set in again. To Y.T., to make grace a negation of every particle of truth, goodness and beauty in nature and history would be to deny anything in common between Christ and humanity and make of him a one hundred percent alien to the human world into which he came. That amounts to a virtual denial of true incarnation. I can still see, as in a movie, how human and childlike Y.T. was in his joy when he was given the quotation from Thomas Aquinas: *Gratia non tollit sed perficit Naturan* (grace does not supplant but perfects nature).

Many of these theological questions do not have great practical relevancy to Christians but Y.T. was helpful to Christians theologically in broadening their perspective. He turned them from a contempt for the world and history to seeing their importance, from alienation from human beings and lack of concern for their welfare to loving them and caring for their welfare. He helped Christians find a world, not just in terms of opposition between faith and unfaith but also goodness and evil, justice and injustice, progress in historical terms and reaction. All of this played a liberating role in the thinking of those who wanted to keep to the Christian faith and yet move towards realities and towards love of the motherland.

Y.T. readily agreed with the assertion that religion often plays the role of opium. But to use the opium formula as the approach to all religious phenomena was a dangerous over-simplification. Under differing circumstances different theological points of view play quite distinctive roles, some narcotic, others expanding Christian awareness, some defending the rule of reaction, others raising critical and conscientizing voices. For instance, it would not be fair to lump together the theologi-

cal voices that were defending the Three-Self Movement and those which sang the praise of the KMT, all under the word opium. Narcotism is one of the roles religion sometimes plays, but not its only role and not its main role in many circumstances.

The consistent idealist

I have set down here a few glimpses into Y.T.'s personal theological excursions to show that as he advanced in age he remained mentally as keen as ever. He made efforts to bring his subjective knowledge in line with objective facts as long as he lived.

Y.T. and I had no direct contact through most of the years of the Cultural Revolution. When we met again in Beijing in 1975, the first question we got into after the long separation was whether from now on Chinese Christianity could do without church buildings and clerical professionalism. Y.T. was still the consistent idealist. During that discussion and our subsequent conversations we never had time nor the interest to go into our personal experiences of the years of the Cultural Revolution.

A person such as Y.T. naturally had some enemies and could not help being misunderstood. As early as the 1930s he was labelled heretic, unbeliever, atheist or communist. Because Y.T. supported the cause of the people he was slandered and vilified on all sorts of things by such people. I can recall one who, on the basis of the title of one of Y.T.'s books, *No One Has Ever Seen God*, attacked him for propagating atheism, knowing well that Y.T. was only quoting part of a verse in John 1 to bring out in the book what follows: "the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known". Y.T. in that book and, in fact, in his life, was trying to show that the character of this God whom no one has seen has been revealed in Jesus Christ and calling people to come to behold and adore and then go and put into practice what we have seen.

In truth, Y.T.'s faith in Christ was of the most stable sort. I do not know where to find another Christian in China who not only kept his own religious faith steadily but also carried on, persistently and carefully, conversations with atheist revolutionary comrades on the truth embodied in Christ. Several cadres in leadership positions in party and government have spoken respectfully of Y.T.'s quiet conversations with them on his religious convictions. Some of them testified that their interest in reading the Bible was due to Y.T.'s influence.

Many Christians are in search of spirituality but most of them do not seem to go into the biblical meaning of the word. They become credulous, catch at shadows and are sometimes fooled. If spirituality means belonging to or siding with the Holy Spirit, if we in accordance with Christ's teaching judge a person by the fruit he or she bears and if holi-

ness, integrity, justice, love, faith, hope are fruits of the Spirit, then we have to acknowledge that Y.T. at the depth of his personality was a most spiritual Christian. He hated darkness and worked hard for its demise. He yearned for the brightness and joy of the New Heaven and the New Earth so much that he strove for the approximation of earth to it. They were sentiments due to the educative enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Y.T. used to tell his audiences that Christian prayer was not any attempt to make God change his good and holy will or to influence God to do for us what was in violation of his nature, but was to open up the windows of our soul to allow the light of God to shine into our inner darkness, to melt away our stubbornness and prejudices so that our thoughts, feelings, words and deeds may be brought to one with the nature of God. If a person had not gone through real, deep experiences in personal cultivation and devotional life and absorbing study of the Bible, could he or she have produced such a lofty conception of prayer out of thin air?

Y.T. was our good teacher and beloved friend, a pride of the Chinese people and of Chinese Christians. God could have moulded such a thinker and doer only through the struggles of our Chinese history and our Chinese church. Other theologians in China before liberation could not achieve as much because of their stand against the people and their blindness and prejudice towards the Chinese people's liberation movement. Their contributions were not comparable to Y.T.'s, even though there are still those abroad who look at their writings as precious gems while relegating Y.T. more or less to the rank of the alien.

I think neither our traditional Chinese "good death at the end of a long life" nor the traditional Western "rest in peace" can adequately mark the conclusion of the kind of life and witness exemplified by Y.T. More and more Christians in China and in other third-world countries are taking up the same views as his and are augmenting and amplifying them, even though many do not necessarily know of him. So the cause Y.T. gave himself to is flourishing. I like to think that, today, in a place much closer to the presence of God, Y.T. Wu is continuing in his search for truth and in his practice of truth as he sees it, continuing in his life of adoration and dedication and continuing to be our co-worker, strengthening our endeavours on earth.

The Truth of the Resurrection

Meditation in Lambeth Palace Chapel, London, 1982

K.H. Ting always valued his Anglican roots. Invited to Lambeth Palace, London, in October 1982, he was asked to speak at the Palace Chapel where his theme was the resurrection.

When I was considering what to say on this occasion, many things crowded into my mind. Should I talk on Chinese socialism or on religious freedom as we find it in China? Or about the Three-Self Movement and the attempt to make Christianity in China Chinese? Or about our post-denominational existence? Or the theological fermentation and reorientation at the grassroots in the last thirty years? Or our deprivation during the years of the Cultural Revolution and our present difficulties and problems, of which we have many? No, what I ought to dwell on at this moment must be the thing that has become the most real and most precious to Chinese Christians after the last thirty years – faith in the Risen Christ.

I do not mean we in China have got some new circumstantial evidence for the empty tomb. I simply mean that when we try to review and summarize what China as a nation has gone through or what Chinese Christians as a church have gone through, resurrection comes up as the word most descriptive of our experiences. To have had some experience of dying and rising up again in our individual life, in our national life and in the life of our church conditions made many of us see that resurrection from the dead is actually the law by which God carries on his work of the world's creation, redemption and sanctification. It is the principle by which the whole universe is sustained and governed. It helps many of us to give away some of our foolishness and slowness of heart when we see the necessity and naturalness that Christ should suffer before entering his glory. Thus we have been enabled to appropriate for ourselves something of the mystery of the risen Lord and to realize his presence and nearness more surely and more intimately.

Many Chinese Christians feared greatly at the time of liberation in 1949 that we were losing many things dear to us, only to find later that they were mostly just excess baggage. But it was during the Cultural

Revolution, which turned out to be quite anti-cultural and not much of a revolution either, that the Chinese people suffered so much and we Christians suffered with them. We felt the gospel to be something precious but the Red Guards and the so-called rebels thought of it as a poisonous weed. We had no means of communicating it or of answering the attacks in the big-character posters. Not a single church remained open. There was no government organ left to protect us from lawlessness. We had no rebel groups of our own to support us, nor any bandwagon to ride on. It was fortunate if we could just worship in a small group in a home. We were very weak indeed, a little flock. By all human reckoning Christianity, perhaps for the fourth time in Chinese history, was again breathing its last.

What we were blind to was that when we were weak and dying, life was in the offing. As Shelley wrote, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Strength is found in weakness, as life is found in dying. As Paul put it, what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. What is sown is perishable, what is raised in imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.

After having lost so much, we find there are more Christians in China than ever before and they are more dedicated too. After having every church closed, we now find that for the last three years one or two churches are being opened or reopened every two or three days and with much greater enthusiasm and vigour. Because we have been a part of the suffering fate of the Chinese people, we today are no longer so dissociated from them but are in much better conversational relations with them than in the past.

We seem to understand Paul when he says,

> We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies (2 Cor. 4:8-10)

and all this by the grace of God. A grain of wheat remains a grain if it does not get into the soil and dies, but if it does it will bear much fruit. This is reassuring and seems to have been proven.

We Christians have tried so often to wrap up the remains of Jesus Christ with the cloth we have brought. Others have often tried to seal Jesus Christ in his tomb with big, heavy stones. But the living Christ himself cannot be bound or enclosed. He breaks out of any man-made tomb.

The resurrection truth tells us that the meek will inherit the earth. This always reminds me of the philosophy of Lao Tzu who spoke of water when he said:

What is of all things most yielding can overwhelm that which is most hard.
Being substanceless, it can enter in even where there is no crevice.
That is how I know the value of action which is actionless.
But that there can be teaching without words,
Value in action which is actionless,
Few indeed can understand.

I think here Lao Tzu was feeling after something which the Christian resurrection truth represents.

The resurrection truth tells us that it is through loss, poverty, suffering and death that life is attained, in nation as well as in church. It tells us life does not depend on power, wealth or property but on the risen Christ, the Lord of life, who is also the ascended Christ, sitting at the right hand of God and upholding the universe by his word of power.

That a person who has died is to come to life again is in all common sense an absurd claim. Yet, almost a quarter of humankind is more or less committed to the resurrection story of Jesus. This is so because this message of hope has touched a chord in the hearts of so many in the world who simply refuse to accept defeat, humiliation, suffering, darkness and death as having the ultimate say and who see, in the midst of all vicissitudes, this message as the key to comprehend history and reality. It gives them comfort and confidence and strength by restoring their faith in the value of truth, goodness and beauty.

I have nothing new or unexpected to report to you. The resurrection truth is an old truth. Your T.S. Eliot says aptly in one of his poems: "The end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time." Knowing the risen Christ as if for the first time enlarges and builds up our faith.

We are the heirs to this message – and its witnesses. Our visit here is a great occasion for us to share our knowledge of this Christ to our mutual enrichment so that our steadfastness in him may be strengthened and our thanksgiving enhanced. May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus equip us with everything good so that we may do his will, through Jesus Christ.

The Universality of the Church

Address at the Ecumenical Centre Chapel, Geneva, 1983

The World Council of Churches endeavoured to keep contact with the church in China throughout the revolutionary changes and welcomed the first visit of a small Chinese delegation to their headquarters in Geneva in 1983.

Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed (Luke 2:34).

As Christians we look forward with anticipation to the bringing of the whole universe, all in heaven and on earth, into unity in Christ when the time becomes ripe. However, the Christ who is ultimately the unifier is first of all a divider, as Simeon's prophecy declares. The taking on of human flesh by the Son of God was the occasion for laying bare what was in the hearts of men and women. In the New Testament we see that human beings, in confronting him, reveal themselves to be, roughly speaking, in one or other of three categories. First, there were Christ's despisers, rejecters, haters, enemies such as the Herods, the Caiaphases, the Pilates, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Then there were the Gamaliels and perhaps the Nicodemuses, liberals in various degrees who chose to be non-committal and to refrain from making a judgment. Then there were those who, in spite of the human finite form of the Christ they saw, could recognize in him the Son whom God had made heir to the whole universe, through whom he had created all orders of existence, the effulgence of God's splendour and the stamp of God's very being, sustaining the universe by his word of power. In this Christ they had a vision of an order of things as God would want to order them and to this Christ they could commit themselves in praise, adoration and action.

The polarization of men and women into these groups – despisers, liberals and friends – happens not only when we are faced with the fact of incarnation. It happens whenever there are new-born things in history. Herbert Butterfield put it aptly when he said, "It is curious how we unconditionally endorse the revolution of the past yet have no under-

standing of the contemporary revolution we are experiencing." Hence, the despisers and those who hold back.

The division of people into those who are for and those who are against takes place whenever there are new-born things in the church. This has been the case all through history. Movements that represent the cutting edge of the church in the world have almost, without exception, faced the fate of receiving ill-treatment from forces of the status quo. Too often these movements become captured by them later and tamed into something docile, conventional and harmless.

New-born things, like new-born babies, are often not comely and beautiful right from the beginning. In the words of W.H. Auden, they

> Ruffle the perfect manners of the frozen heart,
> And compel it to be awkward and alive.

In so doing there is bound to be no scarcity of awkwardness, haphazardness, faults and mistakes which give some pretexts for opposition and grounds for hesitation. But we know that in making a judgment we need to grasp the essence of the matter under consideration, not its aberrations. It is the essence of the matter that counts because of its relative stability and permanence. If virtue lies just in avoiding mistakes, the one who does nothing about anything would be the most virtuous person. Then learning would be entirely irrelevant and out of place.

Today, we two Chinese Christians have come to Geneva to do two things.

First, our coming is an acting out for Christians in China, and perhaps in the world, to see the oneness of the body of Christ and the relatedness of the church in China to the church universal. We are not relaxing our efforts to make the church in China Chinese. This is a question of "to be or not to be" for the church of Jesus Christ in China today. It is evident that, as long as our Chinese people think of Christianity as something Western, there is no way to show that at its centre there is the universal and absolute claim upon all men and women of Jesus Christ as Lord. At the same time, if we do not cherish our identity and selfhood, we will have nothing to give to the church universal. But, important as the fostering of a Chinese-ness certainly is at a particular stage of our church, it bears an inescapable provisionality about it because it concerns only the form of our selfhood, whereas the substance and the justification for the existence of this selfhood is necessarily its being the church of Jesus Christ. This substance we share and affirm with the churches of the whole world. We need to protect the growth of the Chinese particularity of our church, but this particularity will be void of spiritual content if it is cut away from the universality of Jesus Christ, his gospel and his

church. We hope our visit can be a sort of actualization of this truth, first of all to our fellow-Christians in China.

Second, we come with a hope to find Geneva continuing to be the spearhead of the churches' new adventures, defender of the churches' new experiments of engagement in the world and incubator for a child born perhaps a little ahead of its time. We have come to plead for a serious evaluation which Three-Self as a new-born thing in the church deserves and, as much as possible, to change our negators in some parts of the world into Gamaliels and our Gamaliels into friends. It is sheer superficiality, irresponsibility and complacency to dismiss the Three-Self Movement as the manufacture of a political party or as the unprincipled yielding to political pressure on the part of not-so-faithful Christians seeking survival. We think Three-Self, with all the laicization and the post-denominationalism and the kind of theological reorientation that have come in its train, is an ecclesiological necessity, a prerequisite for evangelistic communication in such a country as China. This has already been borne out by facts. It is a process through which the church in China ceases to be a dot on the missionary map of other churches but comes to be itself. The church universal needs us to be true to our identity as Chinese Christians in order to add to the richness and breath of its understanding and worship of Christ.

So might not Three-Self really be a child born in the household of God and destined to be a sign for something beyond itself? Could it be really one of the important breakthroughs in history that has a significance and message for Christians elsewhere too? We hope our visit here can mark the beginning of a process of give and take within the family of God that will bring about better and deeper understanding. We hope this understanding will enable Chinese Christians to improve our own self-understanding through viewing our aims and actions from the new angles which you can provide. We do stand in need of the correctives which can come to us through closer relatedness to Christians elsewhere. And the result of all of this would be that we, in our witness everywhere, will be supported and strengthened by an enhanced spiritual richness and by the intensified thanksgiving and prayers of the whole worldwide church.

A Rationale for Three-Self

Neesima Lecture, Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan, 1984

K.H. Ting's main concern as a church leader in the 1980s and 1990s was the upbuilding of the church: strengthening unity and moving from the basic three-self tasks of self-government, self-support and self-propagation to a church which is well-run in all these areas.

I am specially glad to talk about Three-Self in Kyoto in view of the fact that one of its non-Christian Chinese sympathizers and supporters lived and studied in Kyoto sixty years ago. I am referring to our late beloved Premier Zhou Enlai.

Within certain circles the question of allowing Christianity to take local and national forms is never raised, for to raise such a question is to violate the so-called supranational nature of the church and to introduce a mundane political note into Christian faith in all its transcendence.

In fact, the question was raised as early as there were Christians of the first generation when there was a growing number of Gentile converts to the Christian faith. Should Gentiles, in becoming Christians, be expected to adopt Judaism too just because Christianity was a sect within Judaism and because the evangelists to the Gentiles were themselves Jews? Were Gentiles to practise circumcision, for instance, in order for them to be Christians? The conference in Jerusalem, described in Acts 15, was held on this very subject. Its decision that Gentile Christians were to be free from observing Jewish laws and customs was truly momentous for the future history of Christianity and, consequently, for the future history of the world. The Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone and not by works was liberating. It implied that Christianity was not to remain a sect within Judaism but to enjoy the freedom to maintain give-and-take relations with other cultures, with the potential of becoming a world religion.

Frederick Engels in his study of early Christianity puts it this way:

> Gentile Christianity in rejecting all national religions and their ceremonies and addressing itself to all peoples without distinction became the first possible world religion.

This world religion is not to be a disembodied cosmopolitan faith. It is always local in that in the course of its give-and-take it picks up local colouration wherever it is found. Alan Richardson in *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* points out that the fact of locality is a very important aspect of the New Testament doctrine of the church. He says:

> The church is not like a school of Stoic or Epicurean philosophers, whose existence in a given place is quite accidental. The catholic church is always a local church, the church of some city or country. Locality, nationality, and particularity are the essential marks of the universal church.

It is clear that without the liberation of Christianity from its Judaistic captivity and its enjoyment of the freedom to express its faith in forms that would be intelligible to the Greek mind and later to the minds of other people, the theological creativity of Christianity would be severely circumscribed and its theological development retarded by its status within Judaism. Then, all Christian dogmas about Trinity, about Christ, about the Holy Spirit, about church and so on would remain at best in a very undeveloped state.

The question whether Gentile Christians should be expected to be Jewish at the same time re-emerged in a different form in China four hundred years ago. In becoming Christians, were Chinese to be European or Western too because Christianity was a European religion and the evangelizers came from Europe? Would a Chinese Christianity still be Christianity? Matteo Ricci showed a high respect for Chinese culture and worked for a Christianity that was a Chinese departure from European Christianity through its incorporation of certain native Chinese elements. In so doing he succeeded in making Christianity more communicable to the Chinese intellectuals of those days. Kang Xi, the emperor in the early 18th century, actually became sufficiently sympathetic to Christian faith as presented to have written a poem on the passion of Jesus Christ:

> With his task done on the cross,
> His blood forms itself into a streamlet.
> Grace flows from West Heaven in long patience:
> Trials in four courts,
> Long walks at midnight,
> Thrice denied by friend before the cock crew twice,
> His six-foot frame hanging at same height as two thieves.
> It is a suffering that moves the whole world and all ranks.
> Hearing his seven words makes all souls cry.

You will have seen that this poem, short of any appreciation of the resurrection, nevertheless reveals a very friendly understanding of Jesus

Christ. It seems that conditions were ripe for the emergence of a religion that would be Christian and yet open to all that was true, good and beautiful in Chinese national culture.

Unfortunately, under pressures from Rome, missionaries began to take an intransigent attitude as regards Chinese national culture and, in the name of guarding against syncretism, departed from Matteo Ricci's ways. Hence the ousting of missionaries at the order of the very same Kang Xi emperor.

It is worth nothing that Three-Self (self-government, self-support and self-propagation), as an aim of church building in any country to which missionaries were sent, was a long accepted principle in enlightened missionary circles. Henry Venn, the chief executive of the Church Missionary Society of England, was probably the first person to put these three words together as the goal of missionary work. He did this in 1850 in a paper with the title "Native Church Organisation" in which he also spoke of "the euthanasia of mission". The whole idea was that missionaries were to work in such a way as to make themselves dispensable. Roland Allen, a missionary in north China of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in the 1920s, was specially effective in showing that Paul's missionary way was to make churches independent and local, not holding to the apron-strings of a mother church.

In search of selfhood

China was a country of early nationalist awakening. Several waves of anti-Christian movements in the 19th and 20th centuries were not so much attacks or criticisms of the content of the Christian message itself as opposition to a Christianity actually or supposedly in the service of foreign penetration of China. This political issue was always made so strongly that people with national self-respect would hardly want to hear the real message of Christianity. As a consequence, Chinese Christians have long-cherished ideals that the church in China should be independent. In the 19th century there was a Chinese convert who denied himself baptism until he travelled some one hundred miles by boat to receive it at the hand of the nearest Chinese minister. He started an independent Chinese congregation, maintaining no relationship to any foreign mission. From the 1920s onward many independent churches emerged in China, advocating Chinese leadership and Chinese financial support. Some were even organized nationally. Thus, the Three-Self Movement or the movement of independence was not something that came into being all of a sudden in 1950. Much groundwork had preceded it in churches in China and abroad. Quite a number of Western missionaries working in pre-liberation China were supporters of the Three-Self ideal

and worked hard in laying a foundation for the independence of the Chinese church.

I think it is safe to say that, ever since 49 C.E., the year of the conference in Jerusalem when the issue came to a head, all through the last 2000 years wherever the gospel reaches, whether to a local area or a tribe, a nation or a country, the issue of Three-Self inevitably arises, although the expression Three-Self is not always used. Haters of new China in Hong Kong try to tell us that it was the communists who imposed Three-Self on the Chinese Christians. They surely have studied neither New Testament documents nor history.

For the church in any country to have a selfhood of its own, a real and not a borrowed identity is all-important. First, it provides evangelical effectiveness in the country where it is located and second, it gives enrichment of the church universal in its understanding and worship of Christ. I will now dwell a bit on each of the two points.

Roland Allen wrote in 1902 in his A Policy for North China about what he called "the political difficulty".

> At present the Chinese commonly look upon the missionary as political agent, sent out to buy the hearts of the people and so to prepare the way for a foreign dominion, and this suspicion has been greatly strengthened by the fact that Western nations have, as in the case of Kiaochow, used outrages upon missionaries as a pretext for territorial aggression.

Prof. Varg, in his Missionaries, Chinese and Diplomats, published in 1955, has this to say:

> So strong and continuous was the antagonism towards the missionary that he could never have attempted to Christianize the country had not the Western nations with their superior force upheld their right to be there.

The mixture of cross and flag gave a most ambiguous quality to the expansion of Christianity. You can easily visualize how frustrating it must be in that situation to convince listeners that the Christian gospel was something entirely separate from Western domination and that, in spite of the Western packaging in which it came, there was in it the universal and absolute claim of the Lord Jesus Christ upon all men and women to which they must give heed. That explains our need for de-Westernization, not dissimilar to the need for de-Judaization for Paul and the early Gentile Christians.

Missionary leaders were not unaware of the danger to the cause of evangelism as long as the church in China was just an ecclesiastical protégé of an expatriate society. Celso Constantini, the first apostolic dele-

gate of Rome to China, wrote on the ship taking him to China for the first time in 1922:

> The political position of foreigners in China is based on a structure of privilege and sanction. By virtue of extra-territoriality, foreigners are not liable before Chinese courts. The judicial position of the church in China is itself tied to this structure, which offends the self-respect of the Chinese. Religion is tolerated by virtue of foreign treaties, the missionary is also considered a foreigner, suspected of connivance with foreign powers.

He also wrote:

> The apostles built Christian communities and placed at their head autonomous bishops. Among all the accusations against it, that of being a foreign religion is not found. If the Catholic religion appears to the Chinese as a foreign importation, tied to foreign political interests, is it the fault of the Chinese?

His correct analysis, however, only remained on paper. By 1949, of the 140 Roman Catholic dioceses in China, only 20 were headed by Chinese bishops.

Those opposed to making legitimate accommodation to national culture and aspiration often elaborate on the danger of syncretism. Thus, this word has become associated with a certain triumphalism and intransigence typical of colonial empires.

It is worth recalling that Christianity, which originated in Palestine and Asia Minor, became a Western religion only because men and women took great risks in theology, in spirituality, and in art to express through the medium of Western cultural conditioning the wonderful works of God. The irony is that, as this Christianity with a selfhood all its own moves to the modern age and on to the world scene, the cultural conditioning has been found to be a constriction to the capacity for the worship of a universal Christ and for the communication of the faith to those living in other cultures.

That situation is the main reason for the fact that, in spite of China being the mission field which received more missionaries and more mission funds than any other mission field, the number of converts was extraordinarily small. At the time of China's liberation in 1949 the number of Protestants was not more than 700,000.

Coming of age

Today, thirty-five years after liberation and thirty-four years after the launching of Three-Self, the number of Protestant Christians has gone up to three million, according to a conservative estimate. Of course, people have become Christians out of many different circumstances but the one

underlying reason behind all these circumstances is that the church in China has today shed much of its Western image. Its Chinese-ness is apparent in the personnel of the leadership and in the source of its financial support and it is also growing in ways of expressing the Christian faith through its thought, its worship, its art and its music.

Ours is not a church running educational, medical and philanthropic institutions, nor one possessing sophisticated means of communication but it is clearly an evangelistic and growing church. Christians are witnessing in places where they live and where they work. Now that the stigma of being a Western religion has pretty much been removed and people no longer say "one more Christian, one less Chinese", men and women in various walks of life are more willing to hear what Christianity is all about. The whole experience tells us that a church has to earn its right to be heard.

Three-Self is not generally anti-missionary. We are thankful to God for the gospel of Jesus Christ which missionaries brought to China and for all the good they did in China. We make a distinction between Christian obedience to the great commission of Christ as given in Matthew 28 and the political, economic and military expansion of Western colonialism. But while we do think there is time for Christians to go from one country to another to preach the gospel, we also think there is a time for them not to go so that the church established there can come of age and be itself. Since the reopening of China, many old China missionaries have been back to visit and we are so glad to find them appreciating and endorsing the Three-Self principle and thanking God for it with us.

We have seen what Three-Self does for the evangelistic outreach of the church in China.

Three-Self is also important for the enrichment of the spiritual treasure of the church universal.

It can be said that any local or national church has two poles, its universality and its particularity. We need to conscientize ourselves to both. On two separate occasions in 1982 the archbishop of Canterbury said:

> The Three-Self movement was known in the Anglican church in the 16th century when the Reformers determined to have the Bible read and heard in English. They devised a liturgy in the language of the people and they established a church which, while not abandoning Catholic doctrine, had local autonomy and self-government.
>
> It is only if you cherish your identity and love your roots that you will have something to give to enrich the worldwide communion.

The fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ can only be fathomed and made complete by Christians of all cultural backgrounds. The New

Jerusalem when it comes down from heaven has three gates each in the north and the south and the east and the west for Christians and churches to enter from all directions, to bring with them their peculiar treasures and insights into the richness of the Christ that is yet to be. The universality of the church only exists in all the particularities of the local church. The local church is the place where the meeting between Christian universalism and cultural particularities occur to maximum advantage. We Chinese Christians see ourselves to be a small procession entering New Jerusalem as the church of Jesus Christ in China with all its local colours rather than a dot on the missionary map of other churches.

In Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, there are seven letters written by the Holy Spirit to the seven churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. These churches are situated in different cultural milieus, have their different strengths and weaknesses and are faced with different problems. The Holy Spirit imposes no one pattern on all of them. So the messages are all different. Yet, at the end of each letter appears the same exhortation: "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches." Each of the messages is for the nourishment and enrichment of all the churches of Jesus Christ in the world.

So, when we in China say there are three selfs, self-isolation is not one of them. We do want to be rooted in the Chinese soil but we want at the same time to affirm our unity with Christians elsewhere and receive nourishment from the bosom of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church which extends itself throughout the ages and exists in the particular churches living within all sorts of social systems and cultural environments. We cannot afford to ignore what the Holy Spirit says to other churches. We believe in the interdependence of Christians across national boundaries but we think we can enter into interdependence more truly if we first achieve more independence.

Catholicity in its breadth embraces the churches in all parts of the geographical world. Catholicity in its depth brings in the fruits of the encounters of Christian faith with all cultures. Catholicity in these two dimensions is still in the process of realization. Three-Self is the way in which the Chinese church makes its contribution to the realization of this catholicity. The church universal will be enriched in seeing what the gospel makes of the Chinese people as well as what the Chinese people make of the gospel.

The missionary vocation of any one group of Christians should not be in contradiction to that of the church in mission in its own country. Christians need to be on guard against any expansionism of their own selfhood which infringes on the sacred space that is the selfhood of

another church. That has led us Christians of China to declare to the world that, in order to protect the emerging selfhood of our church from being trodden upon by international interventionism and to prevent the restoration of a foreign image to our church, the work of evangelism and church-building in China is the responsibility and task of we Chinese Christians ourselves, and no group outside of China regardless of skin colour should undertake any work of this nature in China without first consulting the China Christian Council.

This should not be understood as a refusal on our part to take our place in the church universal. It is a protective measure taken to secure a more favourable surrounding for the growth of Chinese selfhood and for evangelistic outreach, and a plea to international Christianity to take a sympathetic attitude, or at least a Gamaliel attitude, to what Chinese Christians have been trying to do and to be. In old China our border customs were controlled by foreign interests and personnel. National industries were in ruin because there was no tariff to protect them in competition with foreign commodities which could sell at low prices in the Chinese market. As a protective tariff is all-important for the development of national industries, so today for the strengthening of the Chinese selfhood of our church, which in turn will be the edification of the church universal, the drawing of some protective line seems to us to be desirable.

"Patriotism" – a word to be used with care

The full name of the Three-Self Movement has the word "patriotic" in it. Because of what has transpired under the word patriotism, there is a legitimate fear as to whether Three-Self is a nationalistic or anti-foreign movement. This fear, however, is not warranted because Three-Self only aspires to make the church in China Chinese, that is, just as Chinese as the church in England is English and the church in the United States is American.

As to patriotism and nationalism, we need to make distinctions. There is the nationalism which gives its first loyalty to the nation or the state and upholds "my country, right or wrong". That is national chauvinism under which criticism of wrong state policies is stifled and oppression and aggression justified. To call this patriotism is an abuse of a word which, through the ages, has acquired a content more noble and sublime. That Chinese Christians, especially their leaders, suffered so much during the Cultural Revolution for upholding their first loyalty to Jesus Christ and not to the political authorities testifies to the fact that when the word patriotism is used by Chinese Christians, it is not used in that chauvinist sense.

On the other hand, there is the nationalism that is born of the people's effort to resist foreign encroachment in defence of national territory, national culture and national language which are being trodden upon by a dominant power. This must not be equated with the nationalism of the aggressor. There are moments when small cultures, cultures in which some great goodness and beauty reside, are being obliterated by the dominant force of a domestic autocracy or a transnational technological society and when those who suffer from displacement and marginalization rise up in self-defence to make life liveable. These occasions call Christians to choose and to take the side of the people of their nation and be the supporters of a nationalism making for progress in history. Sun Yat-sen, a Christian, made a choice of this kind in his stand against Manchu despotism and foreign encroachment and we are mindful of the support he got from friends in Japan.

Patriotism of this kind expresses itself in sorrow over national backwardness and humiliation, and in joy over the people's emancipation and achievements. We find examples for both in the Old Testament. Psalm 137 is an example of sorrow over national catastrophe:

> By the rivers of Babylon –
> there we sat down and there we wept
> when we remembered Zion.
> On the willows there
> we hung up our harps.
> For there our captors
> asked us for songs,
> and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
> "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
> How could we sing the Lord's song
> in a foreign land?
> If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
> let my right hand wither!
> Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
> if I do not remember you
> if I do not set Jerusalem
> above my highest joy!

Psalm 126 is an example of joy and thanksgiving over the people's achievements:

> When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
> we were like those who dream.
> Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
> and our tongue with shouts of joy;
> then it was said among the nations,

> "The Lord has done great things for them."
> The Lord has done great things for us,
> and we rejoiced.
> Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
> like the watercourses in the Negeb.
> May those who sow in tears
> reap with shouts of joy.
> Those who go out weeping,
> bearing the seed for sowing,
> shall come home with shouts of joy,
> carry their sheaves.

From these two psalms and other biblical passages we know that a certain healthy love for the motherland is not foreign to the scriptures and that, consequently, Christians should not adopt a nihilistic posture to it.

Patriotism in China today affirms the achievements made through self-sacrifice on the part of millions of our fellow Chinese and pledges that we will work for continuing the struggle against the evils that still linger in our society, for material and cultural elevation, and for greater justice and human dignity. That is a responsible love for nation. Christians need to care for the welfare of the people of the whole world in all their historical concreteness. For us it means caring for China, not exclusively but as our point of departure, the first stage in our love of mankind. This caring is not in opposition but extends itself naturally to internationalism.

We admire the words of Uchimura Kanzo:

> Jesus and Japan; my faith is not a circle with one centre; it is an ellipse with two centres. My heart and mind revolve around the two dear names. And I know that one strengthens the other.

In the same sense as his, we like to say – our faith is like an ellipse with two centres, the two C's – Christ and China.

One result of Three-Self in China is to land Chinese Protestantism in a post-denominational situation. Early in the 1950s, with the war going on in Korea, there was the freezing of funds between the USA and China which completely paralyzed all the national and many of the provincial and diocesan denominational bodies as well as the national Christian council of those days. They could hardly continue to give directions to their constituencies. Under those circumstances Christians became much more closely related locally across denominational lines. Because of the shortness of denominational history in China, denominational loyalty was not an impediment to the growth of the spirit of unity among Chris-

tians under the umbrella of Three-Self. Today, denominational structures no longer exist, but denominational characteristics in matters of faith and worship which Christians cherish are honoured and preserved. The emphasis of the Three-Self Movement is on the development of the Chinese Christian's selfhood while that of the China Christian Council is pastoral in the broad sense of the word, that is, the nurturing of the spirituality and intellectuality of our churches and groups. This includes the printing of Bibles, the publication of hymn-books and journals and books, the running of seminaries and other theological training centres. These are all things which we find it possible to do together. We trust our present stage is transitional and will lead to the emergence of a truly Christian and truly Chinese church of Jesus Christ rooted in the Bible and in the soil of China. But we have not been given to see clearly what, in God, the next step is.

Chinese Christians are faced with many other problems, such as the big age gap between our present church leaders and their successors still in training, the inadequacy of our pastoral nurturing, the existence of heretical teachings and mistakes in the ways that the policy of religious freedom is implemented by cadres in some localities. But we are aware that churches have always moved forward in spite of all the problems they are plagued with. As we go forward on the path of Three-Self, supporting prayers on the part of Christians elsewhere mean a lot to us. We hope and pray that through the visits Japanese and Chinese Christians are exchanging, a deeper sympathy, love and relationship will emerge between the Christians of our two countries, to the strengthening of each other in the work of building up the body of Christ.

Life Should Have a Mission

Address at the Opening Convocation, Nanjing Seminary, 1984

Following the Cultural Revolution, Nanjing Seminary reopened in 1980 and K.H. Ting resumed his position as Principal, a position which he still holds. More than 60 new students were welcomed at this opening convocation for a new academic year in September 1984.

Take a moment to consider that here in Nanjing, we have gathered over 200 co-workers, classmates and others who busy themselves endlessly providing food, shelter, cleaning and health services, going to class and worship, constructing new buildings, plus all sorts of other activities -- what are we doing, after all? What is it we have dedicated ourselves to? We say that we are responding to God's call, but what is it God is doing? Why has God called us? Why is it worthwhile to respond to this call? I think the story of the angel appearing to Mary found in Luke 1:26-38 has something to tell us.

Goethe said: "The tree of life is ever green, but theory is grey." The story of the angel appearing to Mary is vivid and moving, full of poetry, as evergreen as the tree of life, while what I am saying is grey theory. I don't believe it was Goethe's intention to diminish the importance of theory. Rather, I think he meant to show that theory might function as a foil and guide to the tree of life, making it appear even greener, more attractive and understandable, and encouraging the growth of more trees of life. We in seminary must both foster the spiritual life as if it were the tree of life so that it may grow greener, and also study theory to know and water this tree so that it can grow and mature.

Theory helps us to take a broad view of history. This means we temporarily set aside all the minor matters and look first at the overall sweep of history, understanding incidents as part of the whole. Viewed in this way, the conversation between Mary and the angel in the first chapter of Luke's gospel becomes a sign in the whole history of God's creation, redemption and sanctification. This is an extremely important point.

Our starting point is the love of God, or the God of love. Behind all creation is love. Love is the key to all the mysteries of existence. God's love moved God to create, to teach, to forgive, to save and to sanctify, so

that more and more people may find the source of energy in this love. God's ultimate goal is to create a universe of love, a world of love, in which a human community lives by the principle of voluntary mutual love. God is not a steamroller or a bulldozer, crushing or clearing away people's will and freedom. God's will is love's will, a will-to-fellowship. God created humanity in God's own image. The Trinity tells us that God himself is a community of love.

The visitation of the angel to Mary can be called a sign that as the human-divine relationship develops through the whole unfolding process of God's creation, redemption and sanctification of the world, an important minority has already appeared. God can anticipate this minority working with him as intentional co-workers. If God's expectations do not go unfulfilled but receive a positive response, then the conditions are present among humanity for the incarnation. Human cooperation has been secured and there is no need to wait.

We know that the angel revealed God's plan to Mary – in order to continue his process of creation, redemption and sanctification, God himself was preparing to become human, to come into the world. Mary was overcome with excitement. This was exactly what she, her family and many Israelites had waited for for so long, was it not? Yet, for a young woman like her, the sacrifice asked was very great indeed.

The incarnation was an event of cosmic significance. The question was, would humanity offer its collaboration and cooperation in so great an event, so that it could become a reality? Or would it be indifferent, even resistant and thus delay God's creation history? While Mary was pondering the problem brought her by the angel, not only were God and the angel awaiting her free choice, but the whole cosmos, all of nature and the whole world seemed to be holding its breath, nervously anticipating her agreement, because the whole creation was still waiting to be released in order to enter into the glory of the freedom of God's children. Could anticipation become reality? Let us look at Mary's response.

We know what she said: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Through her response, she became the vessel of the incarnation, its carrier and the history of God's creation, redemption and sanctification entered a new stage.

I like Tu Fu's praise of Li Bai: "Your pen startles the winds and rain; your poems make the gods cry." Mary was a simple young woman, no poet, perhaps she couldn't even write, but her answer could startle the winds and rain and bring tears to the gods more than any line of verse.

We often speak of Christ's obedience. But behind it we see the commitment of the holy Mother. Her offering was freely made, not coerced. It was responsible, not wilful or impulsive. This is a thoroughly self-sac-

rificing love and a thoroughly self-sacrificing commitment. God would like to see a greater abundance of this love appearing among humanity by means of his creation.

I once quoted the stirring words of Teilhard de Chardin to alumni: "Someday, after we have mastered the wind, the waves, the tide and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love; and then for the second time in the history of the world man will have discovered fire." Mary's heedless-of-all-else love for, and commitment to, God was a new departure, emboldening Teilhard to express his vision.

The whole cosmos has every reason to cherish feelings of thanksgiving and reverence for Mary. And not only the whole cosmos, but the angel and God himself, too, are happy and moved because of her loving heart, her offering, her cooperation, her resolute will and her sacrifice.

We can understand from this why, in the hearts of many Christians for many years now, in their theology and in their spiritual lives, Mary has such a special place. Even the Protestant theologian Karl Barth said that he was not against having a statue of Mary in church, as long as it was not placed too high. He thought it should be set among the congregation.

Let us think of it this way. Mary's offering was not her own isolated response as an individual, it was the long awaited fruit of God's work of creation. It represents the will-to-love for God among humankind, that most understanding, most inclined to do good, intentional and willingly cooperative, incisive minority. The familiar saying, "the traditions of our dead forefathers entangle the minds of the living like a nightmare", does not fit this minority very well.

The church's mission on earth is to be the carrier of the incarnation, to bring this word in the beginning among the people. Yes, we must eat, we must have shelter, we must do many things, but behind all this we seek to make ourselves like Mary. In order for the word to become flesh and be seen among people we are willing to let it be done to us according to God's word, without counting any cost.

I don't want you to think the seminary such a wonderful place or that it is the destination and goal of all your seeking. No, each of us is still receiving God's creation, redemption and sanctification. We are all unfinished and we all have our weaknesses. Our actions are at variance with our words and we are disappointing. This is no more than a school – a school for learning the lessons of love. We are all students here and we are all teachers. We grow together and together know God's holiness and goodness. We are all studying how to do these things. This is a more appropriate view of the seminary.

In the worship life of the seminary, in its spiritual life and in theological discussion, you may meet things you are not familiar with. This situation always requires that you learn to respect others, that you learn to value others as yourselves, that you see what you can learn from others. You know the famous passage from Marx: "You praise the constant changes in nature and the infinity of all its pleasing diversity and rich resources. You do not ask of roses and violets that they send forth the same fragrance. Then why do you demand that the most precious thing – the spirit – have only one kind of existence?" In 1 Corinthians 12:3, Paul says that no one can say "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit. Clearly, all who recognize Jesus as Lord are moved by the Holy Spirit. So let us learn the lesson of respecting others to enrich our spirits, our spiritual cultivation and our theology. We, each one of us, need only make Mary's response – I am the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word – our daily prayer and offering and we will be able to become a community of love, a community in which we all practise mutual respect, mutual learning, mutual support and mutual advancement.

Ecumenical and Evangelical

Preface to the *Chinese Theological Review*, 1985

K.H. Ting's concern for the church and his standing as a churchman have been recognized even by his critics. In the late 1950s denominationalism ceased to exist in China and the Protestant churches entered a "post-denominational" era. This transition was disturbing and divisive, especially for some of the more conservative Chinese Christians, making them suspicious of the TSPM. After the Cultural Revolution, Ting contributed a great deal to reconciliation and unity in the Chinese church, urging the CCC to embrace conservative Christian communities outside the TSPM network, including the more fundamentalist indigenous churches. In so doing, the Chinese church would move forward more slowly than foreign Christians might hope, but it would more truly reflect and respond to the Chinese context.

I am very pleased to be asked to write the preface to this first issue of the Chinese Theological Review.

Chinese is now so extensively used in the Chinese churches that friends outside who are not well-versed in the language find it frustrating trying to know some of the thinking going on among Chinese Christians. The Review is truly something that has come for such a time as this and we hope it can appear regularly on a year-to-year basis.

There are persons abroad who try to make out that the Chinese church and its Three-Self Movement (self-government, self-support and self-propagation) are opportunist, serving political purposes and preaching a biased message not fully Christian. Just a casual reading of the articles presented here will show how little ground this accusation has. The accusation is actually based on a very condescending view of church members. The fact is that, in our structurally post-denominational church, our Bible-loving, Bible-honouring and Bible-studying Christians are not theologically so blind and undiscriminating as to fall victim to false teachings thrust upon them by preachers.

On the other hand, I wish to give my personal reaction to the alarm and disappointment voiced by some friends abroad upon their failure to find in China, after over thirty years since liberation, anything approach-

ing liberation theology! To them Chinese Christianity is still "pre-liberation" and "colonial" and Chinese Christians theologically conservative and politically pro-socialist, compartmentalized and dwelling in two realms. Even granting that the church services they attend and the sermons they hear are not representative of the whole of China, their impression is not altogether wrong. In fact, the articles collected here may, to a certain extent, confirm their impression. While I do not mean to justify this state of affairs I feel that, in this connection, a Chinese angle of approach may be worth mentioning.

The separation of spirituality from society and the viewing of things as belonging to two realms has had a long history within the church and with quite strong theological undergirding. It represents one important tradition in the 19th- and 20th-century missionary heritage and still has strong staying power in China today. What has come to be a motto in the Three-Self Movement, *ai guo ai jiao* (love the church and love the motherland), at least permits this dichotomy. After all, compartmentalism has not proved itself in our post-liberation period to be such a harmful thing as it sometimes has been in the past. Our observations over the last thirty years do not bear out the judgment that such a stance necessarily leads Christians to be apolitical. Certainly these Christians are no less participatory than other Christians or other citizens. Furthermore, they change theologically too, although the changes are not so spectacular as some of our friends would like them to be.

The Three-Self Movement and the more recently organized China Christian Council aim at uniting all men and women of Protestant faith. We want to avoid the reproduction of the pattern in some other countries in which Protestants are grouped into ecumenicals and evangelicals. Faith, hope, love and experience combine to tell us that, in the concrete situation of China in which we find ourselves, it is possible to avoid that pattern. We want to ensure the growth of this unity and do nothing to jeopardize it. The last thing we want is a split in the fellowship. For the sake of this unity, in matters of faith, worship and theology, our policy is generally one of equality and mutual respect, not one of offending or inciting people's religious feelings. To convert certain Christians from their compartmentalism to theologies with articulate social and political content, or vice versa, is not our priority. Our priority is to work together on such things as printing Bibles, reopening churches, publishing Christian literature, strengthening theological training centres, working both in political and theoretical fields for the better implementation of the policy of religious freedom, improving the work of Christian nurture in churches as well as in groups meeting in homes and so on. These are the very things which unite us and help us discover and learn from each other.

Ours is a unity worth paying the price for. We have not found that this unity results in stagnation. Three-Self is a new-born thing since liberation and independence. It is neither pre-liberation nor colonial. It is a mass movement in which many Christians move forward together, although perhaps at a slower pace than expected by some.

With all the importance given these days to contextualization, it may not be in fashion to say that, in our view, theology must be in conversation not only with the social and cultural context within which the church finds its being but also within the minds and hearts of the masses of Christians within the fold of the church. A contextualized theology appreciated only by socially conscientized intellectuals abroad but foreign to its own church constituency at home is an anomaly. We are supported spiritually by our own Christians in China. Our first attachment is to them. To be truly their own native sons and daughters is the glory of our theologians. We write first of all for domestic consumption, that is, for Chinese Christians' nourishment and edification. We meet them where they are in ways they can accept. We do not impose on them anything they are not ready for. Theological changes are definitely taking place but these changes, instead of attuning themselves to elitist tastes elsewhere, must reflect and push forward changes, slow as these may seem, in the spirituality and intellectuality of the masses of Chinese Christians. Theologians and rank-and-file Christians need to be in a dialogical give-and-take relationship of mutual learning and nurturing. Dialogues with culture, with natural and social sciences, with philosophy and with the theologians' international community are valuable insofar as they can be channelled to serve the needs of rank-and-file Christians. We value the work of those theologians who can part with their individualistic heroism, humbly and not condescendingly orient themselves to the fellow Christians at their gate, listen earnestly to them, learn from them and summarize their insights. Chinese Christians are supporting all the positive changes in our society brought about by socialism. The religious commitment and spirituality of these Christians, no matter of what sort theologically, cannot really remain untouched by their social and political stand, although in many cases the changes are just touches and are nothing drastic. It is for theologians to be sensitive to these touches and to reflect them honestly and reverently in their work.

It is this new, unprecedented width in the range of Christian oneness, brought to reality as ecumenicals became more evangelical and evangelicals became more ecumenical in the last thirty years, that is, I think, the growing edge of Chinese theological renewal and deserves more attention and thanksgiving.

If all of this is a defence, it is one not of compartmentalism but of the right of Christians of all sorts to be equally regarded, of our responsibility to keep Christians of all sorts in the common bond of fellowship and of the importance of staying close to and reflecting and moulding the constituency given to us.

I sincerely believe the publication of this *Review* will help greatly in presenting the thought content of present-day Chinese Protestantism in international interchurch exchanges across language barriers. I am sure I represent the authors of all the articles, and Chinese Christians in general, in saying that we are grateful to the readers for their interest, concern and prayers and we would appreciate their reflections on the phenomena herein made manifest as something of what Protestantism is in present-day China.

Building Up the Body in Love

Fourth National Christian Conference, Beijing, 1986

In the 1980s, the CCC stressed making the church well-governed, well-supported and well-propagated. But the church could not progress and be well-run without love and the unity love brings. These ideas are explored in K.H. Ting's closing speech at the Fourth National Christian Conference, where he compares the Chinese church to the church in Ephesus.

Let us consider together the letter which the Holy Spirit inspired John to write to the church in Ephesus found in Revelation 2:1-7 and see how it may help us in our work.

The letter praises the church in Ephesus for its strong point – the ability to recognize false apostles for what they are. The church draws a clear line between itself and the Nicolaitans and does not tolerate such false teachers. It is a church capable of distinguishing between right and wrong and of struggling against what is wrong, thus bearing witness to Christ through perseverance. But the Spirit also points out that the problem with the church in Ephesus was that it had departed from the love it possessed at first.

The letter does not blame the church in Ephesus for drawing a line or for its struggles but rather praises it. Under certain circumstances it is necessary to purify the church for the sake of its witness. But the letter reminds its readers that it is not quite enough simply to hate evil. The church is the community of those who love God and of the children of God who love each other. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul also talks about the church upbuilding itself in love and about speaking the truth in love within the church and forbearing each other in love. Struggles, no matter how necessary, are likely to injure the body of the church and its principle of love. Thus, at the appropriate time, the Spirit asks the church to repent and calls on it to recover the love it has lost so as to build itself up in love.

The passage in Revelation says: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Thus we see that this letter has been sent not only to the church in Ephesus but to all churches, and this certainly includes our church in China today.

We are meeting as representatives of Chinese Christianity and of Christians all over the country. I believe that this passage has an important message for us.

Construction and reconciliation

Since the very beginning, the Three-Self Movement (TSPM) has aimed at improving the life and witness of the church. In order to achieve this there was a period of time when we could not but devote much of our attention to struggles, many of which had to do with the purification of the church. They were necessary and condoned by the Spirit. It would be hard to imagine the state of our church today without them and we are thankful to those of our co-workers who contributed much in those struggles. But there is also a time to remind ourselves of the task of building up the church in love. This is the prayer and demand of our Christian people. The more the TSPM turns to this task, the greater the believers' support for Three-Self.

I am not saying that our leaders have neglected this task in the past, nor am I saying that we are now to do away with all struggles and to love all sorts of disorders in the church. We are certainly not to approve of all the anti-China and anti-Three-Self offensives on the part of some who use Hong Kong as their base. This is not at all what I am saying. Rather, with respect to our overall situation nationally today, breaking down must give way to building up, destruction must give way to construction, struggle must give way to reconciliation. Three-Self must be upheld but it must also be implemented. We want to implement Three-Self by building up the body of Christ and by running the church well, thus propagating Three-Self and demonstrating its rightness and necessity. Today, Christians in some places harbour certain misgivings towards Three-Self, not so much because they are opposed to the Three-Self principle as because they somehow feel that certain things done in the name of Three-Self seem to be harming the church rather than building it up. The TSPM need only take the building up of the church as its task and Christians will support it wholeheartedly and the justness of its cause will be taken for granted. If bad persons perpetrate outrages within the church, Christians will gladly stand with the TSPM and China Christian Council (CCC) to oppose them.

Our TSPM has been building up the church in love for a long time. The standing committee of the TSPM called for the strengthening of the life and witness of the church in 1956. The formation of the CCC six years ago was another landmark in the same direction. I am not saying that we made no efforts to run the church well in the 1950s and 1960s but greater progress has been made over the last six years. We thank God

for the contributions made by many faithful servants in the past whom we remember.

Criticism of empty political sloganeering often tells us that good politics should vindicate itself in good practice and high political consciousness with excellence in specialized fields. Similarly, our call for church autonomy and independence must bear its fruit in the building up of the church, just as the worth of our work for self-government, self-support and self-propagation must be proven by governing ourselves well, supporting ourselves well and doing the work of propagation well. Since the reimplementation of the policy of religious freedom in 1979, a great many churches and other centres for worship and meetings have emerged. There are countless problems that must be considered in order to build them up. All of us who are leaders at various levels of the TSPM, ordained or not, must build ourselves up through study and spiritual formation so that, with hearts filled with Christ's love and our feet firmly on the ground, we may become true specialists in the building up of Christian communities. Our TSPM and CCC at all levels must rid themselves of any remaining traces of old ways of thought, attitudes and habits accumulated in the days of struggle. Our working style should be that of the church and of the pastor. We must have great sympathy for pastoral colleagues in daily contact with grassroots Christians and do all we can to serve them, not evading but solving the problems they encounter in that work. To build up the church, elevate the quality of the church, enable our church to find favour in the sight of God, of the Chinese people and especially of Christians – this is the central task of the TSPM and CCC.

In China, a scientist who devotes him- or herself to scientific research which raises the level of his or her specialization and produces scientific results that uplift the welfare of humanity is considered a politically good scientist. Likewise, a teacher devoted to the work of education who raises his or her teaching ability and produces well-trained citizens for the nation is considered a politically good teacher. The same is true of doctors, shop assistants, sales clerks, workers, peasants and artists. In the same way, a person faithful to God's trust, who raises her or his theological and spiritual level and does a good job of pastoral work, shepherding the flock to spiritual fulfilment and enabling them to play an active role in building the four modernizations, ought to be considered a pastor who truly loves country and church.

It is both the will of God and the wish of Christians to run things well. It is also the call of the nation. All enterprises and groups in China are like the children of a family. The family is good only if the children grow up well. Our church is one of those enterprises in the eyes of our

country. Our country expects us to do a good job. For us to work for the building up of the church is both to love the church and to love the country.

We must especially cherish our co-workers who uphold Three-Self, who do their pastoral work well and who are able to meet the spiritual needs of believers. If we want to broaden unity we must respect them, rely on them and value their opinions, for their opinions represent the views of the larger Christian community.

We must have a correct approach to the relationship between the TSPM and the church. The church is the body of Christ, the dwelling place of the risen Christ and the fellowship of the saints throughout the ages. The church is not subordinate to Three-Self. The church is the main body, while the TSPM and CCC are products of certain concrete historical conditions. They are the servants of the church.

We must also have a correct approach to the relationship between the TSPM and the CCC. Three-Self is a patriotic and church-loving association of Chinese Christians. The CCC is a church affairs organization of Christians who are patriotic and church-loving. The relationship between the two is as close as that between the left and right hands of a body. They cannot work, much less live, apart. Without the TSPM, the CCC would easily fall into leading believers along a way which ignored the issue of Three-Self, reverting to old ways and causing division. Three-Self would exist in name only and the church would forfeit its favour in the eyes of the Chinese people and the witness it should bring would lack for hearers. Without the CCC, the TSPM would be distanced from the community of believers, talk grandly of politics, get caught up in formalism and make itself into a mere figurehead. Its base of unity would shrink until it could hardly struggle against false apostles and Nicolaitans. Clearly, those who oppose us, at home or overseas, would welcome a split between the TSPM and CCC. Three-Self must serve the building up of the Chinese church; this was the intention of the older generation who initiated the movement and the reason why so many co-workers and fellow Christians became involved in it. This is the only way the TSPM and the CCC can broaden unity and become the engine leading believers forward together.

Three-Self and the CCC are bodies belonging to the whole of Chinese Christianity. Wherever Chinese Christians may be within China, as long as they honour Jesus Christ as Lord and are not anti-revolutionary or involved in anything that is illegal, that is where we should do our work of Three-Self, our work of unity, our educational work, our work to alleviate hardship.

Unity in diversity

Our church, in building itself up in love, allows for diversity and does not aim at uniformity in matters of faith and worship. In 1 Corinthians 12:3 Paul tells us that no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Thus we have no right to dismiss others out of hand. Those who know Jesus Christ as Lord and those who do not are all moved by the Spirit. In matters of faith and worship we must not force the minority to follow the majority. We urge the majority to care for the minority. But we also hope that any minority will not fail to recognize, with thankful hearts, that Christians of other backgrounds have also been redeemed by Christ, that our faith is basically the same and that we have all received this common faith from Jesus Christ himself. It is the revelation and blessing of Christ. To ignore this commonality which unites us and to dwell only on differences, magnifying minor things to overshadow what unites us, is a denial of the action of Christ, a departure from Paul's teaching and a return to the old path of division. Paul teaches us that it is not up to the eye to tell the hand that it has no use for the hand or up to the head to say it has no use for the foot. We belong together to the one body of Christ. This is the truth of Christ's body, a mystery of the kingdom, Christ's own prayer to the Father and his own message to the disciples before he left the world. It is only as we love each other that others will know that we are Christ's disciples.

Jesus has told us that the church may be compared to crops growing in a field – the good wheat and the bad weeds, sown by Satan while humankind slept. The seven churches mentioned in Revelation all have serious faults but they still stand as golden lampstands and he who holds the seven stars in his right hand walks among them. Jesus does not ask us to spend all our time trying to pull the weeds from among the wheat, nor to transplant the wheat from this field to another. He says, "Let both grow together until the harvest." In other words, he will separate them then. In our church today, it is our task to grow, to enable the wheat to surpass the weeds in order to prevent the weeds from taking over. Those who consider themselves good seeds should be planted in the field where they may grow, not placing themselves outside, accusing this one and that one of being weeds. Our job is not to blame or pull out but to enter into the field and grow so that our church may be run even better.

Long ago in Palestine, there were two brothers living at opposite ends of a piece of land inherited from their father. The elder brother had a family, but the younger had not yet married. One night after harvest, the elder brother thought, "I have a family and more hands while my brother is single. It must be hard for him to cultivate the land. Let me take him some food." Just then the younger brother, too, was thinking,

"I am single and it is easy for me to manage, while my elder brother must find it difficult to maintain a family. I'll take them some food." Laden with crops, they each set out and bumped into each other in the darkness. Crops scattered to the ground as they embraced. Does this not remind us of the words: "Behold, how good it is for brothers to dwell in unity?" As the story goes, it was on that very spot that Jerusalem and the Temple were built many years later. This is the church building itself up in love.

As we meet here in Beijing, let us recall the meeting in Jerusalem found in Acts 15. That was not a regularly scheduled meeting but one that took place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, liberating thinking and building up the church in love. We pray that the Holy Spirit will also guide us, so that a church will emerge in the East in the spirit of Three-Self, suited to the image of new China, building up the body of Christ in love and leading many men and women to Christ. May God strengthen the work of our hands.

Love that Loves to the End

Lecture at Nanjing Seminary, 1988

In this lecture given on 2 March 1988, Ting lifts up the unifying power of love to oppose the destructiveness of class struggle. In theological terms, Ting's de-emphasis on sin stems from his interpretation of God as the Cosmic Lover rather than as a judge or disciplinarian. The Creator God is a God of love, one who also depends on humankind, compelled to do so as a Loving Father reaching out to his children.

Two or three years ago I spent some time in a convalescent hospital in the suburbs of Nanjing near the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum. Many people there were aware that I believed in Christ and at meal-time religion was often the topic of discussion. There were a few boors who would make jokes about Christian belief in the resurrection and the like. I remember one, a particularly objectionable man, who said: "You say there is a God – bring him out and show him to me and I'll believe."

To non-Christians looking at us from the outside, Christianity is just a collection of doctrines. They would find it easier to believe without these doctrines. Yet there are some highly educated people who do believe and find nothing ridiculous about Christianity. The anti-Christians cannot understand such people; they have no way to explain it. When they mention such people in their writings they simply pass over their religious faith without a word – such people as Sun Yat-sen or Einstein, the writer Lao She, Dr Lin Qiaoya, Xu Guangqi or Pavlov. Writers of essays and biographies don't mention their religion. They are presented as if they were all atheists, which seems rather dishonest.

Actually, almost without exception, the reason Christians became Christian was not because a number of doctrines convinced them to turn to Christ. All of us were first touched by love and compelled by love. We first felt the kind of love with which Christ loves us and, touched by the highest, most beautiful, best love there is in this world, we came to the realization that we fell short and that we were sinners. Because of this we willingly gave up everything to accept Christ. We did not first work out each doctrine intellectually. First, we were touched in our deepest

feelings, in the depths of our souls, attracted and melted by Christ's love. And because of this we prostrated ourselves and submitted to Christ.

Doctrines are of course important. Their specialized language safeguards a message, a gospel – the gospel of God's love for humankind. God is love – love made manifest in Christ. This is a universe of love. The basic principle and foundation of the universe is love. We are all objects of God's love. God did not hesitate to pay a heavy price for us. Christianity moves and compels people not by its doctrines but by love made manifest: love held high and spread abroad, love waiting eagerly for the final coming of a world of love. This love draws countless men and women who give their all to extend love's realm.

Doctrine is more concerned with matters of orthodoxy. It inevitably tends towards the rejection of any thought or faith alien to itself. Overemphasis on orthodox doctrine leads easily to monotony, oppressiveness and a lack of vitality. But love is lively and unrestrained, rich and varied, full of creativity. Love is the richest and most colourful spirit on earth. It is infectious, inestimable, unpredictable and incalculable.

Some people insist that love cannot be devoid of self-interest, that love always has a secret motive. When we see the love of Christ, we must proclaim that there *is* love without strings – altruistic love. Christ represents this kind of love. We find this kind of love in many loyal Christians as well.

If those people at the convalescent hospital could approach the four gospels with humble hearts, they would surely get a taste of this kind of genuine love.

How deep, how unchanging was the father's love in the parable of the Prodigal Son! His love tells him that the son will surely return. He eagerly anticipates it. It is this love which melts the son's heart of stone and allows the father to take him back anew as his true son. How much the shepherd loved that one sheep out of the hundred which was lost! He did not wait for the sheep to come back but went to look for it. Finding it, he carried it home.

Jesus so loved his friends that, when he saw them suffering over a death in the family, he could not help crying.

When he saw an ambitious youth he loved him and pointed out to him what it was that he still lacked.

His love made him weep over Jerusalem.

His love for the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the sick, and those in prison was so deep that he said: whatever you do for these people you have done for me.

The woman despised by the world because she had five husbands; the woman accused of adultery by those who called themselves right-

eous; the woman who wept over her sins, washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair – Jesus loved them all.

The man who saw Jesus coming and climbed a tree to see him better, who expressed his willingness to repent and return to those he had cheated nine times their due – Jesus loved him.

His closest friends fled during his passion and some denied him. He was deeply wounded, yet he still loved them.

One sentence says it all: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

There is no greater love on earth than one who would lay down his life for his friends. This is the love of Christ.

This is the Christ in whom we are bold to believe. Love is the true essence of human life. Love is the greatest truth. Love is the most fundamental attribute of God. Love is the intrinsic attribute of the universe. Natural disasters such as storms, earthquakes and volcanoes happen in our universe. We do not understand why, but even so, we do not believe that the true essence of the universe is hatred or destruction. No, we believe that the true essence of the universe is love and wholeness – the love manifest in Christ. With this love in our universe we are held firm, we can be at peace, we can live with strength and meaning and we can give thanks and praise.

This is a world lacking in love – a world that needs love. If people can have love, they can feel secure. So many people long for love but cannot get it.

The transition from semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism to socialism was a long process. Change was a way of life and there were setbacks. In the past, Chinese people lived an agricultural life in harmony with nature: "Work by day, rest at night; what has the emperor to do with me?" But such a life is no longer an option. In the course of all the changes and setbacks, social relationships were strained easily. Things happened that harmed all sides. Add to this some political movements we could have done without and the suffering grew. So many people were driven to distraction and experienced the inconstancy of human relationships. They felt they had no love and they longed for it. Christ's gospel of love can satisfy this longing.

Those who take class struggle as the key link cannot hear the gospel of love. To speak of love seems like speaking out of turn to them. It is harmful to the struggle, a failure to distinguish right from wrong or friend from foe. It seems like surrender. China today is no longer in the historical stage of taking class struggle as the key link. Today everyone wants peace and stability. The gospel of love, the gospel of reconciliation is more to the point. If you look around you will see

that the number of those who believe in the Lord is increasing, not decreasing.

Some years ago the well-known writer Ba Jin went to Japan. At one of the places he visited, his host was bald. Later, the man told him his story. During the Cultural Revolution he was swayed by the propaganda of China's extreme left and he became an ultra-leftist, attacking and harming many people in Japan. Later, he was struck with a deep sense of guilt. He felt he had to do something to apologise but there was no way to make compensation, so he decided to shave his head from then on.

When I read Ba Jin's essay, I was shaken. The line, "take class struggle as the key link", the leftist line, the line of hate, appeared in China from the late 1950s on and there were echoes of it in the church. On some issues this line influenced me too. I do not need to resort to the Japanese man's counsel of despair in seeking to express my repentance. On the basis of what I know today, I am doing what I can to oppose leftism. In the seminary, in the church, in society, I use whatever strength I have to keep leftism from continuing to harm people. I ask God to accept this way of showing my repentance. Leftism attacks people politically, extending the scope of attack and shrinking the scope of unity. From a faith point of view, leftism tramples love underfoot and is a negation of the gospel. We oppose leftism today and raise up love, spreading the spirit of mutual love in the world in order to let love, the love of Christ, awaken the many frozen hearts.

For students at this seminary, the situation is different. No matter what the state of your spiritual life when you came here, your first task is to enter into and go deeper into the four gospels, to enter more deeply into the Bible and there see this Christ, know this Christ, grow familiar with this Christ, be moved by his love, sit beside him and receive his teachings, welcome him among us and become more and more like him. In this way, before we know it, we will become utensils God can use. We can go out and take Christ's love into the world so that it may enter into the depths of many more hearts. As this semester begins, let us begin our pilgrimage anew.

The Cosmic Christ

Address to Friends of the Church in China, England, 1991

God the Son encompasses both the humanity of the Jesus of the gospels and his ethical teaching as well as the concept of the cosmic Christ who embraces the world. Ting's theology of love finds its fullest expression here. He notes that Christ's cosmic nature lies in two things: first, the universal extent of Christ's domain, concern and care and, second, the kind of love we experience in Jesus Christ as we read the gospels.

Let me begin by expressing the Chinese Christians' gratitude for the existence of the Friends of the Church in China. We are a church traversing an unnavigated course. We like to feel we are experimenting on behalf of, and with the blessing of, the whole church of Christ worldwide. The very fact that there is such an organization as the Friends of the Church in China tells us that we are being upheld internationally and ecumenically by friendship, goodwill, prayers and expectations which we must not fail to live up to. Thus, what you are and what you do in Britain reaches faraway China as both a support and a check.

To some Christians, to talk of the cosmic Christ sounds like removing Christ to some celestial outer space. But this is actually not so.

In order to appreciate any proposition it is important to know the particular circumstances under which it has come up and the particular problems it addresses. Let me describe to you the struggle in China, in the course of which the notion of the cosmic Christ has come to the fore on the part of more and more Christians. You will see that the notion is the result of the impact of historical changes upon inherited faith. That impact drives Christians to go back to the New Testament and meet there familiar words glistening with splendour and meaning as if for the first time. I am referring to passages on the person of Christ in, for instance, Colossians, Ephesians, Hebrews and St John's gospel.

The historical changes were those which came into being with the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. This marked the beginning of a period of direct encounter between Christians and communist revolutionaries. In this direct encounter people, including Christians, were greatly impressed by the moral goodness which the new

acquaintances, the revolutionaries, manifested and the goodness they could inspire in others. Their frugality, their self-sacrifice, their honesty in self-analysis, their relentlessness in dealing with corruption within their ranks, their programme for nation-building and their humility made them the incarnation of all that Confucius and other sages taught about the virtuous life. For instance, I knew of one communist party member who endorsed Paul's description of human nature as so often not doing what ought to be done and doing exactly what ought not to be done. I understand some Western Christians, equally impressed, went so far as to say that the new person spoken of by Paul has arrived, not in Christ but outside of Christ. Anyway, these revolutionaries were the opposite of the caricatures of them meted out for popular consumption by the press under the previous regime. As a result, the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Chairman Mao easily became best-sellers.

Human nature being what it is, historical movements with high aims have a tendency to relapse and even to develop into their opposites unless there is constant, thorough criticism and self-criticism. With the gradual passing away of revolutionaries of earlier generations there is a decline in revolutionary spirit and overall moral standards. Bureaucracy and corruption have crept in, as you have heard. But let us not easily write off the spirit of dedication on the part of the revolutionaries, so many of whom are hardworking and self-giving even today. It is not a phenomenon of no consequence but one that makes Christians in China stop and think. It challenges us to a good understanding and explanation from the point of view of our faith.

All along, Christian evangelism has capitalized on human depravity and lack of virtue as the entry point for preaching about sin and on Christ as Saviour. How are Christians to account for the new phenomenon which seems to make Christians' faith pale and superfluous?

The most catastrophic blow was to those Christians who knew and admired Jesus only as a great moral teacher, a social reformer and the leader of what some of them liked to refer to as the Christian Movement, a term which they used because of their dislike of the word "church". They considered the Sermon on the Mount the epitome of Christian faith. Their faith in their cause was greatly shattered when they found that the Christians' programme for changing China was almost nothing compared with the large-scale and very impressive performance the revolution has brought forth. For instance, opium-smoking and prostitution, which Christians had spoken against for a century, were done away with in a matter of months. In the minds of many Christians there lurked the notion that Christians only talked a lot but the communists put their words into practice. That notion was demoralizing to the Christians.

Thus, the 1950s were years when many Chinese Christians were greatly bewildered. As Chinese they welcomed the liberation and reforms it made possible, but as Christians how were they to think of the raison d'etre of Christian faith? Quite a number left the church to join organizations considered to be more effective, among whom were many of Y.T. Wu's students and some of his close friends.

"Do you also wish to go away?"

But not all Christians were bewildered. There were hardliners who engaged themselves in the building up of a "Great Wall" against the inroads of new realities and new thinking. Their way of keeping themselves unmoved in their faith was to refuse to see any good outside Christian faith. They thought nothing of the difference between justice and injustice or between good and evil. The only divide they could see was the one between belief and unbelief. It was an even more negative version of Tertullian's "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" They found their proof-text in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 where it is said, "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers... What agreement has the temple of God with idols?... Come out from them, and be separate, touch nothing unclean." To them, God has lost the world he created to Satan. The world has become Satan's occupied territory. Their proof-text for this is 1 John 5:19 which says, "The whole world is in the power of the evil one." They used 2 Corinthians 11:14,15 to negate the beauty and goodness they saw around them: "No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness." Thus, as one preacher of that school wrote, "God hates good even more than he does evil because the good is far more deceptive."

The practical implication of all of this was to shun anything of beauty in art and in nature, to write off any good human hands did and, meanwhile, to win the lost and wait for deliverance. With this world-view, these Christians got comfort and strength by looking for signs of the worsening of the human situation in the world. Some looked to the imminent return of Chiang Kai-shek's forces from Taiwan and the outbreak of the third world war by which a vengeful God would, in his anger, bring about the annihilation of the world and the punishment of all unbelievers.

Many Chinese Christians found this kind of teaching unacceptable and politically dangerous. Such teaching actually drove a good number of them to leave the church to join the revolution, as the saying went in those days. We have found that this kind of teaching dies hard. Today, forty-two years after 1949 it still has a fluctuating market in China.

Many of those other Christians who remained with the church seemed to hear the question Christ asked of the twelve disciples (John 6:67), "Do you also wish to go away?" They chose to answer like Peter, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Their situation led them to a renewed study of the Bible, fully conscious that 1949 marked a great shift in the life of the nation and possibly in Christians' understanding of spirituality. Their former understanding of reality and of truth might need to be de-absolutized so as to open a way for new insights and a new spirituality.

For Chinese Christians, the significance of knowing Christ as having a cosmic nature lies essentially in ascertaining two things: first, the universal extent of Christ's domain, concern and care and, second, the kind of love which we experience in Jesus Christ as we read the gospels. This love is the first and supreme attribute of God and basic to the structure and dynamic of the universe. In the light of it we get an insight as to how things go in the world. I will not try to take you into the world of Chinese classics but will only say that what they teach about the unity of the universe and the benevolence with which it is governed prepares the Chinese mind to treat favourably the proposition of the cosmic Christ.

First, there is the universal extent of Christ's work, concern and care. Christ is not so small as to concern himself only with religious or spiritual or ecclesiastical things, or only with believers, or only make converts of those who do not yet consciously believe in him. He is the one who sustains the universe by his word of power (Heb. 1:3). His is the primacy over all creation. He exists before all things, and all things are held together in him (Col. 1:15,17). This does not mean that God created the world and ceded its control to the successful rebellion of Satan, but Christ came to rescue certain individuals out of it to be returned to God. As creativity is inexhaustible and creation a long process, Christ has everything to do with creation thus far and with creation as it goes on now. His concern is to bring creation to its fruition when love, justice and peace become the rule. Redemption, like education and sanctification, does not stand against creation but is one process with creation. Not only communities of Christians here and there but humankind as a whole and, indeed, the whole cosmos are within the realm of Christ's redemptive work. The Holy Spirit, in the same way, is not only the giver of gifts to Christians or to the church but also inspires all created beings with great goodness and beauty.

The question as to how Christians are to think of non-church values, that is, values on the part of those who profess no faith in Christ is, of course, not unique to mid-20th century Chinese Christians. First-century Christians faced it as soon as the gospel reached the non-Jewish world.

Right at that point, the church began the process of discrimination, adaptation and assimilation. In China, the early Nestorian church had no hesitation in incorporating Chinese national culture, as shown by the fact that the 2000-character inscription on the Nestorian Tablet uses the classical *Book of Changes* and the *Odes* nearly thirty times each and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* nearly twenty times. Matteo Ricci also pioneered in bridge-building between Christianity and non-church values. James Legge was a sort of Protestant Matteo Ricci. It was most unfortunate that the constructive missionary approach of these pioneers was invalidated in a fit of self-mutilating doctrinaire orthodoxy. The intransigent approach that ensued caused Christianity to be the same as alienation. The missionary approach in old China went largely the way of divorcing the converts from their heritage and from the people's sociopolitical movements and protecting them with Western colonial military and economic power. That led it to the verge of a disastrous collapse with the success of the communist revolution in 1949.

My guess is that more or less the same story of alienation was repeated in other third-world countries. It seems that the depreciation of national cultures was a particular vice of colonialism in its efforts to justify itself. Chauvinism and colonialism were served when syncretism was thrown around as an alarmist label. But nearness of human beings of different cultures to each other, brought about by modern technology and by the passing of colonialism, makes holding nihilistic attitudes towards non-church goodness untenable. What is unique about Chinese Christians' experience in 1949 is only that the breakthrough happened in a traumatic way and that it was brought about by the challenge of a revolutionary movement under communist leadership.

We receive great consolation in reading Romans 5:15-17 where a comparison is made between the effect of Christ's grace and that of Adam's fall. There Paul speaks of the infinitely greater impact of Christ on humanity than that of Adam by using such expressions as "much more", "vastly exceeded", "in far greater measure" and "out of all proportion". We are elated and get a sense of liberation upon reading this. The incarnation profoundly affects human and cosmic life in all its aspects. It is inconceivable that any area of human endeavour should be unaffected by grace. But too often we make sin universal while limiting grace only to the few who profess a belief in Christ. It really amounts to saying that the incarnation of the Son of God has made less of an impact on humanity than the fall of Adam. But this is not a view that can go along with the vision of a God whose name is love and whose concern is to create, that is, to redeem, educate and sanctify a humanity that will reach perfection as free and intelligent agents or co-creators with him.

A world still in the making

Can we square the existence of atheism with the cosmic role of Christ? I think we can, as much as we can square the existence of many other things in the world with his cosmic role. In the first place, we have good reason to be grateful if we realize how much any denial of God, even just the use of the term atheism, helps to raise the question of God, and that is an evangelistic service in any society which has little to suggest the idea of God. It is also true that atheists are not all of a piece. Some atheists give consideration only to what they can gain by assuming such a posture. There are "rice atheists" at least as much as there were "rice Christians" in the earlier days of Christianity in China. But there are other atheists whose cry against God is really a cry in favour of humanity. They are sincerely devoted to efforts to fashion a more humane society. Their atheism is not superficial but worthy of our sympathy. It is the rejection of false notions of God which we religious people have put forward. The atheists' judgments can only be made on the basis of the ideas of God that they come across, which usually are such distorted representations of the reality of God that atheists can hardly be expected to take that reality seriously. Who is the God they have in mind when they deny his existence? Is it the tyrannical Jupiter who chains Prometheus to a cliff because he does good for humanity or the ruthless underworld king of Yen in Chinese popular religion who sends out emissaries to fetch people to be thrown into everlasting hell fire as punishment for their demerits on earth? Atheistic humanism can be our ally, as it can help greatly to salvage authentic faith. We can join forces with these humanitarians to oppose the idolatry in those views of God that diminish human dignity and block human liberation. From our point of view, in the human pilgrimage towards the kingdom of God we need not absolutize the opposition between theists and atheists. We both "see in a mirror, dimly" (1 Cor. 13:12) while undergoing transformation into new persons in Christ.

Some of my friends are surprised that I sometimes speak as highly as I do of certain atheists and communists. What I want to say is that there is a part of me which utters a hearty "Amen" to what they do and say, a part of me that refuses to rebuke them but rather warms to them and wants to work with them. I am with them against forces we both want to combat, even though they and I have our different objects of ultimate loyalty and get our orders in doing certain things together from different chains of command. It is the conviction of many of my colleagues that, as long as there is space for Christian witness to be borne and for dialogue on issues to be carried on, we must, for the good of the church, refrain from adopting confrontation and martyrdom as church policy.

To assert the cosmic dimension of Christ's role does not mean that everything that happens in nature and in history is Christ's work and design. Many things are happening that contradict God's loving kindness and are harmful to the welfare of the world. Creation is a long process yet incomplete and, as Paul insists, imperfect and subject to frustration, especially as it involves the making of free human beings who are not slaves but children of God. A world still in the making must be one in which ugliness and devilry have their place. Events all over the world are telling us how tortuous the way is towards the perfect community of free, loving children of God and how dear a price in suffering God and human beings have to pay for every inch of progress towards that goal.

In the 19th century the picture that inspired many Western Christians was that of the church going into the world and gathering all nations into its fold. Today, what catches all Christians' vision is the picture of Christ leading the whole creation towards the goal of unity in God. In this saving work of his, all human movements of progress, liberation, democracy and humanization are joined. The church is important as the place where Christ is explicitly known, confessed, adored and preached. The world needs the church's gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation and peace. But God's saving work is not coterminous with the boundary of the church. It has the whole cosmos as its limit. As Vatican II says, "Many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside the visible structure of the church and so the helps necessary for salvation are always and everywhere available to all who are obedient to the dictates of conscience." I like to think that, if these elements are arcs of a circle, Christ is the perfect round in whom they will all be completed, fulfilled and united.

That the whole of reality is God's concern and Christ's domain seems to be a proposition already commonly accepted in Western churches, but in China we are still in the process of winning more Christians. We in China are finding out from the Bible how Abraham received blessing from Melchizedek, the pagan king of Salem; how Cyrus, King of Persia, a Gentile, carried out God's purpose and made possible the rebuilding of the holy city and the holy temple; how Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon also worked for God who thereby bestowed on him a recompense and how, in Isaiah 19, God calls Egypt "my people" and Assyria "the work of my hands" alongside Israel, "my heritage". Because we have seen and experienced goodness, truth and holiness among followers of other paths and ways other than the church, we cannot resist a vision of the universal creative and redemptive activity of God for all humankind, aside from the particular redemptive activity of God in the history of Israel and in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is implied when we say Christ is cosmic.

God is love: hope for history

The other implication of discovering the cosmic dimension or nature of Christ is to ascertain love, the kind of love we glimpse in Jesus' earthly life, as the supreme attribute of God and the principle by which the cosmos is run.

That God is love has become pretty much a platitude. We need to make Christ-like love the definition of God, the all-commanding part of the revelation of the nature of God himself. We have been trained to think of God mostly in terms of superior power which can either crush us or make us powerful. This is often a projection and legitimization of our power-hungry, exploitative, monopolistic social structures and attitudes. But in the New Testament, God's power is made perfect in weakness and he exercises sovereignty through crosses, not through conquests. We must stop fashioning God in the image of Egyptian, Persian, Roman and Chinese rulers, thereby giving to God the attributes which belong exclusively to Pharaoh, Caesar and their like. We need to relegate to the side all those attributes such as his absolute power, his absolute knowledge, his absolute changelessness, his absolute dominion and majesty, his arbitrariness and intolerance. These are imposed on God but largely reflect an absolutization of our own human cravings – especially male human cravings. These attributes need to be de-absolutized and subordinated to God's supreme attribute of love.

That Christ is cosmic gives us assurance that God is the cosmic lover, not a cosmic tyrant or punisher. He works by education and persuasion rather than coercion and forced obedience. He lures and invites and waits for free response and does not resort to scolding and reprimanding. That is why many of us in China find the gospels' analogy of the transformation of seeds and the growth of plants in air, rain and sun more appealing than that of beating and controlling the sheep with rod and staff. God's is the will-to-fellowship, not the will-to-power. For Chinese Christians, to discard the image of a vengeful, frightening God, of God the omnipotent, in dealing with humans and to come to adore God the lover, the sympathizer, the fellow-sufferer who comes to us, is a shift that is truly liberating.

During the so-called Cultural Revolution, which turned out to be not only anti-cultural but also abusive of revolution as an honoured word, when injustice, hatred, thirst for power and arbitrary condemnation of the innocent ran riot, the image of God the Lover was seen to be such a shining contrast and source of comfort and hope that many were drawn to this God. He spoke lovingly to the heavy-laden and gave the unacceptable in the world an acceptability and rest they could not find elsewhere.

Alfred North Whitehead caricatures many of the prevailing theological notions of God of his days as "the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover" (*Process and Reality*). These notions went to mission fields sometimes in even more aggravated forms. We yearn for a different God, a God who first of all loves as the Cosmic Lover with a love exemplified in Jesus Christ. We want to depart from a severe and intimidating God who is not the Christ-like God the four gospels want us to believe in. The image of God in Hosea 11:4 is of one who "leads [us] with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, [who] eases the yoke on their jaws, and bends down to [us] and feeds [us]". To confess that Christ is God-like is now seen to be not so important as to affirm that God is Christ-like and that Christ-like love is the way God intends for the running of the cosmos.

God being love, more and more of us are seeing that the father figure is not necessarily the only or the best analogy for understanding him. For centuries and to this day, in China anyway, what is taken for granted is that the father shows severity and the mother loving-kindness. In fact, the proper Chinese way to refer to one's father in conversation is "the severe one in my family", while "the loving one in my family" is reserved for the mother. I assume that we all know of fathers in whom love is hardly an attribute. There are biblical passages which show no hesitation in using the image of the mother to indicate how God loves. In Isaiah 66:13, it is God who says, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you." Again, in Isaiah 49:15, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you"; and in Psalm 131:2, the Psalmist says, "But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a child quieted at its mother's breast."

This emphasis on God as the great Lover working out his purpose for the world brings in its train an understanding of reality as in the process of becoming. It gives us hope for and beyond history. We cannot fathom the actual time and manner of the end of history but we know it will come about and we are sure it will be the triumph of love and grace. The way from alpha to omega is never a straight line but love accompanies the pilgrims. We have to go through tortuous ways but we remember Christ says to us: "When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world" (John 16:21). We see the darkness that appears before the dawn as well as the dawn that will surely arrive after darkness. As is so well said in Psalm 30:5: "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

These two points about Christ – the cosmic extent of his role and the Christlike love with which God runs the universe – are not entirely foreign to Chinese culture. A passage in Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* says:

> The supreme Tao, How it floods in every direction!
> This way and that, there is no place where it does not go.
> All things look to it for life, and it refuses none of them:
> Yet when its work is accomplished it possesses nothing.
> Clothing and nourishing all things, it does not lord it over them.
> Since it asks for nothing from them,
> It may be classed among things of low estate;
> But since all things obey it without coercion
> It may be named supreme.
> It does not arrogate greatness to itself,
> And so fulfils its greatness.

This passage prepares the Chinese soil for receiving a Christ whose dimensions are cosmic.

The cosmic Christ is a rich concept. It says something of Christ, the meaning of which is quite beyond human understanding. We are only groping. It is a notion that has come to Christians who are no longer satisfied with the classical two-nature debate and want to make a shift. What I have tried to do is to present before you what we in China have in mind when we say fumblingly and clumsily that Christ is cosmic. For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then we will see face to face.

Creation and Redemption

Graduation Address at Nanjing Seminary, 1995

In seeking a meaningful dialogue with atheism, Ting urges a positive view of humanity, believers and non-believers alike. For him, an unyielding emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith has created in the Chinese context an unnecessary distance between the ethical actions of Christians and non-Christians and goes against a true Christian humanism. Here he counsels Nanjing Seminary graduates to see creation and redemption as equal parts of God's whole plan of salvation. These issues continue to be widely debated in the Chinese church.

Recently, a Christian whom I do not know has written me a number of letters, raising his contention that the phrase "all people are born of God", which appears in the catechism, is wrong, and that it should say "all people have been created by God". I understand his meaning to be: God has divided people into two categories and most people have simply been created by God, while only those who are saved because of faith were born of God.

I am not so well-versed in biblical terminology. My feeling is simply that, when we speak of humankind, whether we say created by, or born of, is not of great issue. In speaking of Christ the Bible explains that he is the only Son born of the Father, that he is the first-born and was not created. In the Nicene Creed we also find the phrase "begotten, not made". But when it comes to people, naturally the more common term is "created", as "God created humankind", but "born of" is also found, as in Acts 17:29: "Since we are God's offspring" (at the time, Paul was speaking in the Areopagus to the Athenians, who worshipped the unknown god). Finally in 1 John 2:29, "everyone who does right has been born of him".

As far as Christ is concerned, it is necessary to say that he is the only Son of God, born and not created. However, it seems unnecessary to say that Christians are the offspring of God while non-Christians may only be said to have been created by God. There is no clear evidence in the Bible, either, for distinguishing between "born of" and "created". To emphasize the distinction creates theological problems. These days, peo-

ple generally say that all people are God's children, and I do not feel that one has to take issue with this. It is not necessary to say, no, *you* are not God's children, only *we* are God's children. This is not helpful in bringing people to Christ, and it leads to a problem: if God has made only believers his children and given them eternal life, then is the God who has created the great majority of humanity only finally to become children of hell, a God to be believed in and loved?

If we consider the problem in theological terms, then I think the issue is how to bring creation and redemption together. My Christian correspondent has divided the world into two parts: one which has been created by God – the mineral, plant and animal worlds, such as the grasses and trees, birds and animals, natural human beings, all these were created by God and it seems that God has little feeling for them: created today, gone tomorrow and the human beings among them will even suffer eternal punishment. The other part is born of God. It is a cut above the created part, it has been chosen. In addition to being created, it has been *redeemed*. In the eyes of this Christian, born of and created by cannot be discussed in the same breath. Obviously, he makes a very clear distinction between creation and redemption. I suspect that he sees it this way: God is the Lord of all creation, Christ is the Lord of salvation and each minds his own store.

This is classic theological thinking. Carried to its logical development, it evolves into the following attitude: true, the world has been created by God, but creation is finished. The world has been possessed by Satan and is his dominion. When Christ came into the world, it is as if he slipped behind enemy lines to save those who could be saved. It may be that quite a number of Christians hold such a world-view.

Setting creation and redemption in opposition to one another and separating the Lord of creation from the Lord of redemption, emphasizes redemption at the expense of creation. God the Father and God the Son are split and each tends to his own. This view, which tears apart the Trinity, appeared early in the history of the church. Some heresies go to the extreme of making the Lord of creation and the Lord of redemption into two opposing gods. My Christian correspondent in his treatise "created" and "born of" has not gone this far.

Christ is Lord of both creation and redemption, as Colossians 1:15-20 says quite clearly. On the one hand, it says that Christ is head of the entire body of the church and that redemption was realized through the blood of his cross. On the other hand, it says that all creation depends on him, that he was before all things and all things were created through him. Ephesians 1:22,23 is similar: Christ is both head over all things, the fullness of creation, and all things in heaven and on earth find their full-

ness in him. It also says that he is the fullness of the church and that the church is his body. Christ's relationship to creation is described very clearly in the gospel of John: all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. Hebrews says that all things are sustained by Christ's powerful word. The creation undertaken by God through Christ is proceeding even now. Creation has not failed, it has not lost out to Satan. Though John said "all creation is sleeping beneath the hand of the Evil One", this is simply to point out the savagery of sin, to make the reader draw a clear line between him- or herself and sin and it is not describing the Christian world-view. In 1 Timothy 4:4, Paul says "Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving." The New Testament recognizes Christ's creation and it also recognizes his redemption. This is one and the same Christ and creation and redemption are a unity, not an opposition. There are not two gods each tending to his own.

The question of salvation

Today, we are sending off a group of seminary graduates who are leaving our alma mater to work in the church. Other classmates will be going out to work in the church after a further year or two. When we go to another country we need to know something about the situation there and the same is true when we go out into the church. Let me introduce one aspect of the situation in the church. I hope you can all agree or, at least, that you will not be too quick to disagree. Theological thinking in the Chinese church tends in one direction, that is, one doctrine is lifted up and that doctrine is the issue of being saved by faith, the question of salvation. We tend to pass over or ignore completely the issue of creation. Literary and art circles once had their "one-book-ism", which meant that once an author had written one book and made a name that author wrote nothing else. The Chinese Christian church sometimes seems to have one doctrine, that of personal salvation or personal grace. Out of all the riches of Christianity, only this is left.

Several centuries ago, Thomas Aquinas said that grace in no way negates or abolishes nature but is a fulfilment of it. This may be the most famous of Aquinas's sayings. The question of the relationship between nature and grace is that of the relationship between creation and redemption. This is a problem which the Chinese church has not been very good at solving. The most obvious sign is that many people who join the church believe that by simply believing in Jesus they will be saved, blessed and given grace.

The eighth chapter of Romans tells us that the whole creation has been groaning until now. This is to say that creation is not yet finished.

The world and the people in it are all products at various stages of completion who have appeared in the process of God's creation. A few individuals are not the only objects of redemption. The whole creation, the whole world, is the object of Christ's work of redemption. We are half-finished products and our duty is to assist God in the project of creation and, at the same time, transform ourselves from half-finished to finished products. Creation contains redemption and the purpose of redemption is to fulfill God's creation.

Recently a letter was sent to our church magazine *Tian Feng* asking: Are Christians allowed to smoke? The meaning was, if Christians smoke could this eventually have an effect on whether they are saved? Could they go to hell? But many questions which touch on how one should treat creation seldom suggest themselves to us: Why should so much farmland be used for growing tobacco? It is like growing opium. Is it really a good use of nature? Is it in line with God's original meaning for creation? To take this further, in the United States the number of smokers is decreasing yet the cultivation of tobacco is not. Cigarettes are exported to the third world, to countries such as China, where today many people smoke American cigarettes. Don't Christians care about this? Do they condone it? Oppose it? Such questions far surpass those of personal salvation and blessing. They are related to the well-being of millions of people. They are moral issues and ones that Christians should be concerned with. To enlarge the scope of Christians' concerns, to guide them, with Christianity as their starting point in considering moral issues which transcend the personal – this, to me, is the principle by which to raise the quality of our Chinese Christian church.

There must be a moral message for the world

The creation which God undertook through Christ is in the process of being spoiled and desecrated by humankind. Wars plunge millions of people into misery. Their homes are destroyed and their families broken up. People are made destitute and homeless. The earth produces enough food for everyone yet, because of human selfishness and greed, many die of hunger each year. We have all seen pictures of adults and children in parts of Africa, who are simply skin and bones, on the brink of death. People have done a poor job of watching over and safeguarding God's world; rather, they fell forests and burn timber and oil. All this destroys the ecological balance. The third world has suffered the most. This damage to the globe for their own self-interest by a minority of people, this theft of the right of the majority to sustain existence and enjoy a good life, takes many forms. Take an example close to home. In Chinese society today, corruption – the use of public resources for personal profit –

is rife. A Christianity which turns a blind eye to all this, one which thinks all this bears no relation to the gospel, which believes the gospel is concerned only with personal salvation, is not a two-legged Christianity but a lame one.

Most Chinese Christianity speaks only of personal blessings and salvation and has no moral message for the world. Yet the Bible has a great number of passages concerned precisely with what relations between people should be. How much the Old Testament prophets lifted up social righteousness and social justice! We seldom hear sermons preached today on the Old Testament prophets or on Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Christianity has become an immoral, amoral religion. There are so many events taking place in the world today which are counter to God's plan for the world he created in Christ and to all of this Christianity says "it's nothing to do with me". Christianity even limits the scope of God's dominion, preaching a God who cares only about the individual believer's soul, who cares only about the church and not about the world and all that is in it. Is this not a world-view and a view of God, in which God, having created the world, has now stood aside for Satan?

I hope that graduates of Nanjing Seminary and those of other seminaries in China will take with them when they go into the church to work a holistic Christian view of God, Christology and world-view and, in specific situations, use language appropriate to the situation, follow the teachings of the Bible and spread them, thus raising the quality of our churches.

This is looking at the significance of our work from a long-term perspective. I certainly do not think that our graduates should go to a place and ignore everything except preaching the salvation of Christ, styling themselves as local prophets and publishing their views on the problems they encounter there, in and outside the church. We have all sorts of limits and this is not something I am asking of our graduates. We must first do well in the work of uniting all those around us and in setting ourselves on a firm footing.

Recently we received a long-distance call from an alumnus who graduated from Nanjing Seminary a few years ago. He said that the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of Protestant Churches in China and the China Christian Council where he was were holding elections and that someone, whom everyone knew was a disreputable person, would be serving as deputy chair. He was livid and asked me what to do, whether to struggle against this. I told him that it was good that he was infuriated by these goings-on but, since this person certainly must have support, it was unwise to beat his head against a stone because the losses would outweigh the gains. My purpose in saying this is to tell you that I am not

suggesting you go out and enter randomly into the fray, striking out all around and laying yourselves open to trouble. That would not help.

The important thing is that we be clear in our minds that the gospel of Christ is not merely one of personal blessing. In fact, it is not that at all. Personal blessing is no more than the fulfilment of selfish personal desires. The gospel of Christ includes the renewal of this world, bringing it into line with the beautiful plan of the God who created it through Christ. This requires the church to announce a moral message, a message of service to people. The Lord Jesus himself said: "The Son of Man has come not to be served, but to serve, and to lay down his life for the salvation of many." Please note the word "and". This means that laying down one's life for redemption and serving people are not opposites, but are one. Laying down one's life for the salvation of many is joined to serving people; it is included in that service. Let us go forth to serve the people, with minds to help God realize his creation and, in our service, make manifest the great event of the saving Lord laying down his life for humanity.

No matter where you go, may the Lord be with you, may he help you to manifest before people the truth, goodness, beauty and all riches found in Christ, that by your excellent witness you may bring people to know Christ.

God's Self-Revelation in the Bible

Address to the Sixth National Christian Conference, 1998

Ting has maintained a positive evaluation of atheism founded on improvements in the lives of individuals and society as well as good deeds by non-Christians. This is an ethical stance – an affirmation of a moral code which is not at variance with Christianity. This address is a further exposition of views expressed in the previous selection.

My title is rather long but not at all complicated. Because God reveals things to us in the Bible gradually, revelations are not single events over and done with. In the same way, human understanding of God's revelation does not come all at once either but unfolds and increases gradually.

From its earliest sections to the most recent, the biblical text records over one thousand years of history. Over this long period, God has many times and in many ways corrected people's misperceptions of God and led them step by step to understand God better. As it says in Hebrews 1:1, "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets."

Jesus' own words in John 16:12,13 express the same idea. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth."

Why should this be so? Why doesn't God tell us everything he has to tell us all at once? Why spend over one thousand years of Bible history telling us? Because we would not understand all at once and, if we could, we could not bear it. Apart from our sinfulness and weakness, each one of us absorbs so much in terms of culture and tradition that has been shaped by those who came before us. Our ideas and viewpoints, the way we think, all this comes from our families, our parents, teachers, neighbours, friends, classmates and colleagues. And much more comes to us from novels, movies and television. Once they have taken shape, these ideas, viewpoints and ways of thinking become ingrained and are very hard to change.

We know that God's love extends beyond the Israelites to many other peoples. God made this explicit to people in many and various ways in the Old Testament. He announced it in Amos 9:7. "Are you not like the

Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? says the Lord. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" Again in Isaiah 19:25: "... whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage'." However, by New Testament times, many people still had not taken in what they had heard, maintaining that God was only the God of Israel and God loved only the Israelites. This being the case, it would naturally take a very long time for God to correct the Israelites' misperception of him.

When God used Peter to enable the gospel of Christ to break through the bonds of Jewish ethnicity and spread to all the peoples of the world, the first thing required was that Peter receive the gentile Cornelius. Peter's resistance to this was great (Acts 10). It had been ingrained in Peter that he should not come into contact with "unclean things" and this was an obstacle to God's wonderful will. God had to use other means gradually to turn Peter's thinking around. Later his thinking did change a little but he was still rather stubborn. In the church too, there were some who still clung to tradition and did not change a bit.

God's love extends to all peoples

There was a very long period when, in the eyes of the Israelites, God was the God of Israel, the one who led them into Canaan. The Israelites believed that God wanted them to slaughter the original inhabitants of Canaan. Today we see this as a barbaric and inhumane act, something that could not be the will of God. But, at the time, Joshua and others felt that this was God's righteousness. Many such views of God can be found preserved in the Old Testament books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.

Consider two passages:

> But as for the towns of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them – the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites – just as the Lord your God has commanded (Deut. 20:16,17).
>
> So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings; he left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded" (Joshua 10:40).

Such views persisted for a long time, right up until the exile. Psalm 137:9 still calls for the Babylonian infants' heads to be dashed against the stones. Jonah is another example. Coming from a narrow ethnic background he was only too anxious that the people of Nineveh not repent so that he could call down the wrath of God to destroy the city.

But God is a merciful God. God told Jonah, "Should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left?" (2:11). We see from this that the Israelites' misperceptions of God died hard.

However, through a long period of revelation and teaching from God, the view that God's love extends to all peoples is becoming more widely accepted. Finally, in 1 John 4:16 we read, "God is love." We might consider this as the height of biblical revelation about the nature of God. It can also be considered the pinnacle of human understanding of God. It is many years from Deuteronomy and Joshua to 1 John. God felt that humanity had progressed to such an extent that some people, at least, could embrace this revelation that God is love and so he spoke this simple and clear truth. In other words, only after a long passage of time would there be some people able to understand, accept and take up this simple truth that God is love.

And so some say that there is internal development in the Bible. I would say that we have no reason to oppose such a view.

"God is love." Love is not a sometime attribute of God. Love is not merely one attribute of God among others. Love is the foremost attribute of all God's attributes. This *is* the gospel. John 3:16 begins, "For God so loved the world" and only then says that God sent his only son into the world to complete his plan for redemption through the incarnation, giving eternal life to those that believe in him. Without love on God's part, God could be seen simply as a deity absorbed in his own perfection, unconcerned for human beings. If we speak only of God's righteousness and do not speak of God's love, the image we give of God is that of a punisher. Christian faith becomes a religion of fear and dread brought down to the level of common primitive folk religion. In fact, righteousness is derived from love. Only with love as the prerequisite can there be talk of righteousness.

The just nature of love

There are four children in my family, including me. Once my parents had to be away from home for some time and my father knew that we would quarrel over food, so he made a rule. One of us must cut whatever we ate, be it cake or fruit, into four pieces (one each) and let the other three choose first, taking the last piece for him or herself. This made it much fairer and we didn't quarrel. I have always remembered this and have always thought my father the wisest and fairest of fathers. He loved us four children and his love never changed. His fair-mindedness and righteousness were expressions of his love.

When love reaches many people, the just nature of love will be made manifest.

During the second world war Hitler put all the Jews in Germany into concentration camps and sent them to places specially constructed to kill them. They were stripped of their gold teeth, their hair, their clothing and locked into windowless rooms where they were gassed. Over five million died. This cruel and barbaric act is called the Holocaust. Some supporters of Hitler claimed that the Jews were guilty of murdering Jesus and should be punished for their crime. They quoted the Old Testament, using as evidence the Israelites' attack on Canaan and their holy war against weaker peoples, saying the massacres were God's command. They negated the love of God in the name of God's righteousness, thereby extinguishing God's love and portraying God as a hater of humankind and a brutal punisher. We must shout at those who hold such a view of God that God is not Satan, nor is God a fascist! The Holocaust is condemned by all who speak of righteousness in this world. When we speak of God's righteousness, we must not for a moment forget that it must be founded primarily on God's merciful love.

When China was invaded by the Japanese military empire, forty million soldiers and civilians lost their lives. There were people in our church then who said that this was God's punishment of China. But many people in the church also asked why God would punish the Chinese victims and not the Japanese invaders. God is love, God is righteous, but this righteousness must be under the rule of God's love.

God is the cosmic lover. With a heart of merciful love he is constantly creating and redeeming. This teaching has been the decisive revelation for my own spiritual journey. It has deepened my faith, my hope and my love.

This view of revelation has helped me to attain a more complete and consistent approach to the Bible. I would like you to ponder the following: Is there development taking place in the view of God and other concepts in the Bible? Can this understanding help us better to discover the treasures hidden in the Bible?

The God described in the book of Joshua and the God of 1 John do not seem to be the same God, but there cannot be two gods in the one Bible. I can only say that due to human obtuseness, God's revelation must progress gradually. It must develop, moving from low to high. The understanding of God expressed by people in the Bible also evolves gradually until it reaches perfection. If we deny that the view of God in the Bible changes and develops, what other means have we to reconcile the supposed contradictions in the Bible? Let us humbly await wisdom from God, and may the Chinese church gain a view of God and the Bible that will be pleasing in God's sight.

My View of These Fifty Years

Tian Feng Monthly, July 2000

In recent years, K.H. Ting began to call for more diversified theological thinking within the Chinese church, judging other theologies and points of view on their merits, or seeking truth from facts, absorbing what was beneficial in them rather than rejecting their contributions outright. In the last few years the issue has been posed more sharply through a series of seminars to study and discuss Ting's writings. These seminars emerged from the CCC's call for "theological reconstruction" at all levels, a reflection of the developing context both outside and inside the church. Here, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the TSPM, he reflects on the Christian experience in China and the need for theological rethinking to move the church forward. Theological reconstruction is envisioned as a means to reintegrate theology and society – a theologian's response to the government's call to adapt religion to socialism.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) of the Protestant churches in China is fifty years old this year – fifty years in which it has felt its way forward. Fifty years is a long time. As we look back on these years with grateful hearts we naturally tend to divide them into several stages in order to see the whole movement more clearly. I am sure that everyone would have their own method for determining the divisions and each method would have its strong points.

In the earlier years, leftist political forces grew stronger in China and with the coming of the Cultural Revolution a perfectly good Three-Self Movement and all of Chinese Christianity were attacked together as anti-revolutionary poisonous weeds. Their treatment was unjust in the extreme and Christians, like all their compatriots, entered upon a long period of suffering. I believe this period was a disaster for *all* Chinese and not just for Chinese Christians.

Following the first period, Chinese Christianity should have been self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. This is a point which the majority of Chinese Christians can understand, agree with and support. But they were not content with this. They were anxious that the Chinese church, in addition to being self-run, should be run well. With

things returning to normal after the Cultural Revolution, one voice within the church sounded clearer and clearer. Self-governed must mean well-governed, self-supported must mean well-supported and self-propagated must mean doing propagation work well. This became known as "running the church well" and this hope was expressed by Christians all over the country. Y.T. Wu's intention in initiating the Three-Self movement was to run the Chinese church well. But this demand that the Chinese church be well-run went beyond the mission the Three-Self Patriotic Movement had delineated for itself. When we established the China Christian Council outside the Three-Self organization in 1980, our purpose was to set up an organization that would complement the TSPM and guide our efforts in running the church.

My second period begins in 1980. Since then, the Three-Self Movement has entered upon a new period of running the church well. This is not meant to imply that all the tasks of the first period have been completed and can be set aside. This second period is the continuation of the first. It is an extension and enrichment. Only a Three-Self that runs the church well can satisfy believers and bring more of them to understand and endorse Three-Self.

Running the church well is a rich concept whose meaning includes recovery of church property, restoration of worship, opening new churches, running seminaries, printing and distribution of the Bible, publishing hymnals and church periodicals, ordination of new ministers, drafting all sorts of regulations for ordination, the management of the church and so on.

In the process of striving to run the church well, co-workers and fellow Christians will necessarily begin to ask themselves, privately or publicly: What does "running the church well" mean? Does it mean restoring everything to the way it was before liberation or before the Cultural Revolution? Does it mean modelling our church on a church in some other country?

The need for theological renewal

We are beginning to realize that theological renewal is a necessary and fundamental issue for running the church well, a crucial issue among many weighty issues facing the church. Many rather nice new buildings are going up at the various seminaries these days but the more important question is, with what sort of theology do we equip our theological students? We live in a socialist society. This being the case, how will our students adapt if we keep to the status quo of the 19th and 20th centuries, mechanically copying all the traditional ways received from the Western missionary movement?

To address this situation, we have identified that the crucial task for running the church well is theological renewal or reconstruction. Our Three-Self Movement has entered upon the highest and most important stage of its fifty years, the third period, the period of theological renewal.

President Jiang Zemin has said that we should actively guide religion to adapt to socialism. Adapting to socialism is a call to all sectors of society, politics, education, literature, art, and so on. It is not designed specifically to inconvenience those of us in religious circles and it is not simply a matter of words because thinking must be adapted as well. We Christians must further adapt in terms of theological thinking. This is especially important for the TSM and CCC, for pastoral workers and for theological faculty and students.

We will never change our determination to uphold patriotism, to oppose imperialism, to sustain independence, self-government, self-support and self-propagation. Nor will we change our purpose of running the church well through opening enough churches and seminaries and printing enough Bibles. The third period is in no way a negation of the first and second periods. It is a deepening of the first two and a theological enriching of them. The experience and wealth amassed in the first two periods will not be lost.

It is worth noting that we are not speaking of three unrelated movements but rather of three interconnected periods of one single movement, each period leading naturally into the next. Throughout the process of the TSM we must uphold independence, love of country and love of church, increased unity and the implementation of the three "wells".

Our future vision of the Chinese church is one that is rich in a theology that respects reason and is more suited to Chinese socialist society. It will be one that can help believers to establish a more harmonious and reasonable faith and witness. Such a theology will gain the attention and ear of our people, especially in intellectual circles and in the Christian community worldwide. Christians overseas will be happy to engage in equal dialogue and exchanges with us. They will no longer take us lightly or say that China has no theology. I deeply believe that more and more Christians will recognize the urgency of theological renewal and be willing to dedicate themselves to this vision.

Glossary

Amity Foundation: An independent Chinese voluntary organization (or non-governmental organization) initiated by Chinese Christians to promote health, education, social service and rural development in China. Established in 1985. K.H. Ting serves as the president of Amity.

China Christian Council (CCC): The CCC was established at the third national Chinese Christian conference (1980), and K.H. Ting served as its first president until his retirement. The CCC is based in Shanghai, and oversees the ecclesiastical affairs of the church; for example, publication of Bibles, hymnals and Christian literature, oversight of theological education, volunteer training, women's work and work among minority Christians, and promoting and strengthening unity among churches and church bodies at different levels throughout the country. The CCC joined the World Council of Churches in 1991.

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC): A national consultative body which serves as the institutional framework for interaction between party and state leaders and representatives of other organizations and sectors of society. Members include distinguished scholars, educators, and intellectuals, and key representatives of religious and minority nationality groups. K.H. Ting is one of the vice-chairpersons of the CPPCC.

Cultural Revolution (1966-76): An era of radical and "leftist" movements and policies in China, which included the repression and persecution of various factions of government officials, intellectuals, minority and religious groups, and anyone associated with the West. The term comes from a slogan introduced by Mao Zedong in 1940, urging the need for a "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution". The Cultural Revolution was begun in August 1966 to rekindle revolutionary fervour of the masses outside formal party organizations.

Kuomingtang (KMT): The Nationalist Party of China, founded by Sun Yat-sen. The KMT became the party of Chiang Kai-shek, and was defeated on the mainland by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949. It remained in power in Taiwan until the late 1990s, and now serves as a minority party on the island.

Leftism (or ultra-leftism): In the Chinese communist lexicon, "leftism" refers to an "adventurist" and dogmatic approach to ideology and nation building. It is now used to describe: (a) the Cultural Revolution era (1966-76) and the political movements of the 1950s as a whole; and (b) a political position which adheres to a rigid interpretation of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. It may be contrasted with the more pragmatic communism which emphasizes "seeking truth from facts" and is associated with Deng Xiaoping and his successors.

Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NUTS): National-level Protestant seminary created in 1952 through the union of eleven independent seminaries. K.H. Ting has been principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary since its founding.

Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China (TSPM): The TSPM was formally established in 1954 at the First National Christian Conference in Beijing. Y.T. Wu (1893-1979) was the first chairperson of the TSPM; he was succeeded by K.H. Ting in 1980. The purpose of the TSPM is to "serve as the patriotic and church-loving organization of Chinese Christians... to lead Christians to love the nation and the church, to strengthen unity within the church, and to serve the aim of making the Chinese church well run" (from the 1997 revised TSPM constitution).

Contribution: family, 1 million divorced, to stabilize family
golden era & religious development
55.000 church
3700 pastors, 150.000 lay leaders
Why? – we have space to grow before
it was regarded as superstition
Evangelism strategy – social service
6) post-denominational

Chinese Overseas — 4th visit — 6/12/10

part of bible = the very important ecumenical

- Religion & Religious Policies in the People Republic of China

5 officials religions: Buddhism - Confucius
have freedom to choose -
religion develops
1990 church develops

Policies
(1) Separation of church & state
communist party won't impose atheism
Religions are not allowed to interfere the education
> Cultural of china
No absolute separation

(2) teach equally
have the freedom to believe

State favouritism - identity problems & stability

church building = need application

transitional period of China
→ to an urban industrial
→ from plan to market economy
(money issue ...)
& multicultural dimension
religion & ethnic & the unbeliever
[state: Orderly & stability

church growing news ? harmonious

23,5 millions

"... Ting's contribution to the re-emergence of church life and the opening of the church to the outside world in the 1980s and 1990s is widely recognized. He guided Protestant Christianity in China from a patriotic movement to a church in formation. As both theologian and churchman, Ting has promoted reconciliation between church and society, Christian and non-Christian, China and the world. This will be his enduring legacy to Christians in China and to the church universal." (From the Introduction.)

The essays and sermons in this volume cover Bishop Ting's nearly 60-year career as a leader of the Chinese church and an ecumenical theologian.

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The Chinese script on the front cover reads, "Love never ends".

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